

Fall 10-24-2017

Perceptions in a Changing World: Teachers' Attitudes Towards the Implementation of Educational Innovations with a Focus on Social and Emotional Learning

Tiana Holmes

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.kennesaw.edu/teachleaddoc_etd



Part of the [Educational Leadership Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Holmes, Tiana, "Perceptions in a Changing World: Teachers' Attitudes Towards the Implementation of Educational Innovations with a Focus on Social and Emotional Learning" (2017). *Doctor of Education in Teacher Leadership Dissertations*. 19.
http://digitalcommons.kennesaw.edu/teachleaddoc_etd/19

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Office of Collaborative Graduate Programs at DigitalCommons@Kennesaw State University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Doctor of Education in Teacher Leadership Dissertations by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@Kennesaw State University. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@kennesaw.edu.

Running head: Perceptions in a Changing World

PERCEPTIONS IN A CHANGING WOLRD: TEACHERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF EDUCATIONAL INNOVATIONS WITH A FOCUS ON
SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING

by

Tiana Covington Holmes

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education

In Teacher Leadership

In the Bagwell College of Education

Kennesaw State University

Dr. Megan Adams & Dr. Iván M. Jorrín Abellán, Chairs

KENNESAW, GA

2017

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine teachers' attitudes toward the implementation of educational innovations - with an explicit focus on social and emotional learning (SEL) and new teacher mentor (NTM) programs. Because teachers are primarily responsible for absorbing new information and implementing educational programs directly to students, their attitudes may influence how the program is perceived, the program's delivery, and may also impact the program's outcomes. Support for novice teachers is often regarded as necessary and warranted in many schools, and researchers unfailingly reveal findings that demonstrate the effectiveness of SEL; specifically in traditional school settings (Slaten, Irby, Tate, & Rivera, 2015). Due to the success of the programs, many Title I schools and districts have adopted both SEL and NTM programs, and incorporated them into their educational organizations to improve teaching and learning. Aiming to explore the effects of teachers' attitudes toward the implementation of the aforementioned programs, a multiple case study approach was employed using semi-structured interviews and focus groups to gain an understanding of the perceptions of educators in elementary and middle Title I urban schools in the Southeastern region of the United States. Five elementary teachers have participated in an intrinsic case study addressing their perceptions and attitudes toward the implementation of social and emotional learning; while four middle school teachers have participated in an intrinsic case study addressing their perceptions and attitudes toward the implementation of a new teacher mentor program. All nine participants have been asked "open-ended questions minimizing categorical and yes-no questions" (Stake, 2010, p. 90), and have been observed in order for the researchers to directly see data relating to the story told during their interview. The four middle school teachers also participated in focus groups. The rest of the document is divided into five chapters. In each chapter, the components of case study one (SEL) will be described. A cross-case analysis of both case studies will be included in chapter 5 in order to address the common tension that

Perceptions in a Changing World

has been identified in both cases.

Keywords: social and emotional learning, Title I, teachers' attitudes, teachers' perceptions, teacher mentors, new teacher mentor program, new teacher support, induction programs, urban, multiple case study

Dedication

This project is dedicated to my husband, Arthur Holmes, for his unwavering support; to my father, William Covington, Jr., for being my guardian angel throughout my life and educational career; to my mother, Shirley Covington, who taught me to trust in God, work hard, and never settle; to my sister, Sharmaine Covington, who taught me how to keep going; to my niece and nephews, Shardai Swift, Shamar Swift, and Bryant Swift, who pushed me to be a positive role model even when I wanted to quit. With the unwavering support of your family, anything is possible. Thank you for being my biggest cheerleaders and sources of inspiration!

Acknowledgements

To God be the glory! I know that through Him all things are possible, as evidenced by the completion of this chapter in my life.

I wish to express sincere appreciation to Dr. Iván for your consistent support and guidance throughout this journey. Your relentless commitment to the students of Kennesaw State University is truly admirable – not to mention your timely and specific feedback. To the other members of my committee, Dr. Adams and Dr. Stockdale, I wish to express sincere gratitude. Your feedback, and expertise throughout this process has been invaluable. All three of you have continuously challenged me beyond my imagination, in order to bring life to my work and make it more meaningful. I am truly grateful to have been led by such a group of dynamic professionals who are committed to the field of education.

To the participants of the study, thank you for lending your voice, time, and talent. Your willingness to give to this study made it a reality. What you do daily to impact the lives of students does not go unnoticed.

To my collaborative dissertation partner Joy, thank you from the bottom of my heart. When I was initially told that we would be completing a collaborative study, I was apprehensive. I knew that it would bring on a challenge that I was unprepared for. However, I did not expect to gain a friend. I am grateful for your motivation and support. Thank you for the long phone calls, numerous meetings, and for being the voice of new teacher mentor programs during this study.

To my friends and linesisters, thank you for your patience and support. Your calls and text messages sent to check in on me and provide me with words of encouragement assisted me throughout this process. A special thanks is extended to Pam, Kimberly, Michelle, Keisha, and Maria. Thank you for taking on the role of mentor in addition to friend.

Perceptions in a Changing World

To my mom, thank you for supporting me and praying for me as I worked to accomplish this goal. You have taught me the important values in life, and have shaped me into who I am today. You were my first teacher, and I thank you for always expecting more of me. Thank you for cheering from the sidelines, while dad, grandma, and granddad cheered from above.

Finally, to the love of my life, Arthur, thank you for your unconditional support and encouragement. Thank you for being understanding on those nights when all I could do was read and write. Thank you for giving me three years to pursue this dream – even during the times when I had to put school work first. All of my successes and accomplishments I share with you, and I look forward to many more to come.

Table of Contents

List of Tables and Charts.....	vii
List of Figures	viii
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	1
General Introduction to the Aim of the Collaborative Proposal.....	1
Research Question	2
Introduction to Teachers' Attitudes Toward the Implementation of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL).....	2
Conceptual Framework	3
Personal connection to the research topic	3
Theoretical support	5
Statement of the problem.....	8
<i>Research questions</i>	9
Summary of the Chapter	10
Chapter 2: Literature Review	12
Review of Literature on Social and Emotional Learning (SEL).....	12
What is social and emotional learning?	12
<i>Self-awareness</i>	13
<i>Self-management</i>	13
<i>Social awareness</i>	14
<i>Relationship skills</i>	14
Social and Emotional Learning in Urban Environments	14
Successes and Failures of Social and Emotional Learning – Does SEL Really Work?.....	15
Student Success	17
Teaching Social and Emotional Learning	17
Training Teachers in Social and Emotional Learning.....	19
Summary of literature on teacher mentoring programs	21
Summary of Literature	22
Chapter 3: Methodology	23
Case Study 1: Teachers' Perceptions on Implementing Social and Emotional Learning in a Southern Title I Elementary School	23
Worldview of the researcher	23
Justification of the Research Tradition Selected	24
Context & Participants.....	29

Perceptions in a Changing World

Data Gathering Methods	32
Data Analysis	34
Strategies to Ensure Trustworthiness	35
Ethics	37
Case Study 2: Providing Support to New Teachers in a Dedicated Mentoring Program	37
Research questions.	38
Cross Case: Description of the Convergence of both Research Designs to Illuminate Teachers' Attitudes Toward the Implementation of Educational Programs.....	38
Chapter 4: Findings.....	41
Process Followed	42
Do Teachers at LJS Elementary see a Relationship between Social and Emotional Competence and Academic Achievement?	44
Urban environments	45
Is there an Effective Approach that can be used to Manage Organizational Change during the Adoption of SEL?	51
Is there an Effective Method that can be used to Prepare Teachers to Teach Social and Emotional Learning?	56
A Day in the Life of the Participants.....	64
Observations	73
Building positive relationships	74
Designing supportive environments	76
Social emotional teaching strategies	82
Conclusion	84
Chapter 5: Cross-Case Analysis.....	87
Introduction	87
Case Study 1 Major Findings	88
Determination of Major Findings.....	90
Case Study 2 Major Findings	94
Cross-Case Analysis	97
Are teachers' attitudes hindering the success of educational innovations that promote teaching and learning?	98
<i>Major finding 1: Teacher's attitudes are not hindering the success of educational innovations for teaching and learning</i>	99
<i>Major finding 2: Teachers' positive attitudes are not hindering the success of educational innovations for teaching and learning</i>	101

Perceptions in a Changing World

<i>Major finding 3: Unique contextual factors in urban title I schools impact teachers' attitudes toward educational innovations for teaching and learning</i>	101
<i>Major finding 3: Unique contextual factors in urban title I schools impact teachers' attitudes toward educational innovations for teaching and learning</i>	102
Reflection of Future Work.....	103
Case study 1	103
Case study 2	105
Conclusion	107
References	109
Social and Emotional Learning	109
New Teacher Mentor Program	114
Appendix A	116
Appendix B	118
Appendix C	126
Appendix D	127
Appendix E	128
Appendix F	129

List of Tables and Charts

Table 1	Participants (pseudonyms), Grade-Levels, Years of Experience, Years Implementing SEL, Years Employed at the Site, Date of Interview, and Date of Observations
Chart 1	Terms and Iterations that Support Participants' Positive Attitudes

List of Figures

- | | |
|----------|--|
| Figure 1 | Cross-Case Conceptual Framework |
| Figure 2 | Intrinsic Case Study – Social and Emotional Learning |
| Figure 3 | Anticipated Data Reduction for the Proposed Study |
| Figure 4 | Cross-Case – Multiple Case Study |
| Figure 5 | Observation Notes – Mr. Walker’s Observation |
| Figure 6 | Scenario Read by Teacher (Second Step Lesson Scenario) |

Teachers' Attitudes Toward the Implementation of Educational Innovations

Chapter 1: Introduction

General Introduction to the Aim of the Collaborative Proposal

The study of teacher attitudes, as well as their beliefs are pertinent for understanding and determining the successes and failures of educational innovations. Teachers' attitudes are deeply connected to the strategies that they use to promote teaching and learning (OECD, 2009). "They shape students' learning environments and influence student motivation and achievement" (OECD, 2009, p. 89). Both researchers of this dissertation were seeking to use a multiple case study to determine if the attitudes of teachers were hindering the success of teaching and learning through the use of social and emotional learning (SEL) and new teacher mentoring (NTM) programs. As professionals in education working as instructional coaches in Title I urban school environments, both researchers were interested in the role that the attitudes of teachers play in educating themselves, as well as their students. It is important to examine teachers' attitudes to seek an understanding of the effects that their attitudes may have on their practices. The researchers were employing a joint and collaborative study to determine if SEL and NTM programs, two educational innovations that have proven successes, were affected by the teachers who implement them. Each researcher, however, worked independently to address SEL or NTM programs.

Delving into teachers' perceptions on implementing SEL in a southern Title I urban elementary school was necessary to determine the ways in which teachers' attitudes affect the program; which in turn affect student learning. It was also necessary to examine teachers' perceptions regarding the support that was provided through the NTM program at an urban Title I middle school in the southeast region for teachers' attitudes can affect their willingness to engage in the program with fidelity. Using a multiple case study approach aided the researchers in determining if a common tension existed in the

Perceptions in a Changing World

implementation process of both programs. The next part of the chapter will provide an introduction to social and emotional learning, which was the focus of case study 1; followed by a cross reference to new teacher mentor programs.

Research Question

The overall question driving the multiple case study has been the following: Are teachers' attitudes hindering the success of educational innovations that promote teaching and learning? However, each intrinsic case study has been driven by more specific research questions addressing their uniqueness – which will be further addressed in chapter 3.

Introduction to Teachers' Attitudes Toward the Implementation of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)

Successful student achievement is now considered to be caused by an amalgamation of academic and social skills (Martinsone, 2016). Schools today have the responsibility of educating the whole child, which increases the school's role in "behavioral and emotion regulation, social awareness and communication" (Martinsone, 2016, p. 57). Because of the current shift of the school's role, social and emotional learning programs have been developed, and are implemented in an effort to increase and improve students' social and emotional competencies (Martinsone, 2016). Social and emotional learning paired with the regular academic curriculum is expected to aid in developing greater self-confidence and lead to greater student success (Duckworth & Seligman, 2005). Researchers Wang, Haertel, and Walberg explored substantial learning effects in 1993. They found that the most necessary change needed to improve student outcomes include a focus on academics and social emotional learning (Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1993). Their work led to the current shift of the role of the schools.

"One of the most prevalent SEL approaches", related to the shift of the schools, "involves training teachers to deliver explicit lessons that teach social and emotional skills" (Weissberg, 2016,

Perceptions in a Changing World

para. 14). Because of this, the attitudes of teachers are very important and impactful to the learning process. The goal of this dissertation was to highlight the gap in the research regarding social and emotional learning in a non-traditional school environment, as well as determine if there was a relationship between teacher attitudes and how students learn. Focusing on how social and emotional learning affects minority students in a Title I urban school environment, this dissertation specifically aimed to gain an understanding of teachers' perceptions and attitudes regarding the implementation of social and emotional learning competencies as they relate to how students learn. Through the use of a qualitative intrinsic case study approach, five teachers participated in semi-structured interviews and observations in order to explore their experiences with the phenomenon under study.

Conceptual Framework

The different components of my conceptual framework were based on the model proposed by Ravitch and Riggan (2012). Both researchers explain that the primary goal of a conceptual framework is to tie the complete research process together, and generate a case that validates the significance of the research study (Ravitch & Riggan, 2012). Following their design, I defined the importance of what had previously been studied on the topic of social and emotional learning, and provided a reason why the topic should be extended to include title I urban environments.

Personal connection to the research topic. As a fourth grade student, I experienced the tragic and sudden loss of my father. My teacher went over and beyond to ensure that my life continued to thrive. She made home visits, and provided me with the undying support that I needed to overcome such a tremendous loss. At that time in my life I decided to become a teacher. I wanted to make a difference in the lives of students like my fourth grade teacher had made in mine. I decided that my educational talents would be most beneficial in Title I schools located in impoverished areas. Students in these schools need a strong educational support system in order to combat the barriers that they face in their

Perceptions in a Changing World

everyday lives. My thirteen year career in education, however, has shown me first hand that we are missing the mark while attempting to equip our students with the tools that they need to live as successful adults.

Recently there has been a new push to focus on preparing students, not only for the next grade level, but for college, careers, and life (Roe, 2015). Social and emotional learning prepares a foundation and is said to heighten students' ability to succeed in college, careers, and life (Weissberg, 2016). "Social and emotional learning (SEL) is the process of developing students' social and emotional competencies – that is, the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors that individuals need to make successful choices" (Yoder, 2014, p. 2). My interest in this topic stemmed from years of low achievement data coupled with disruptive and unwarranted behavior problems. Social and emotional learning could possibly provide the solution that we are in search of to help overcome the aforementioned barriers.

As my personal and professional motivations for engaging in this research have been mentioned, I think that my passion for students, and the sense of urgency that I have to solve the problems influenced how I thought about and approached the topic. I have worked in many different environments with a variety of school leaders. I have tried several other reforms and programs, yet have not witnessed success. The children that we are serving are suffering, and I would like to know if SEL is what we are lacking. I approached my research with a hopeful heart, however, I was aware that this may not be the solution to our problems.

My agenda for taking up this topic in the selected setting was to determine what teacher's perceptions were regarding the challenges and supports encountered with the implementation of social and emotional learning. My agenda was influenced by my desire to know if SEL is the solution to the problems faced by educators today including academic achievement and behavior concerns. Because the

Perceptions in a Changing World

teachers are the individuals who implement the program, their perceptions are crucial to the program's success. As a researcher, I had the responsibility to disseminate knowledge based on existing knowledge and research results. My agenda heavily relied on the honesty of my participants. A truthful, unbiased relationship was essential in order to prevent harm to the research. My personal bias included experimental bias. Because I am employed at the site, I knew how difficult it was to implement programs, paired with the obstacles that we were already facing. Despite my bias, I urgently desired to find out if SEL was the solution.

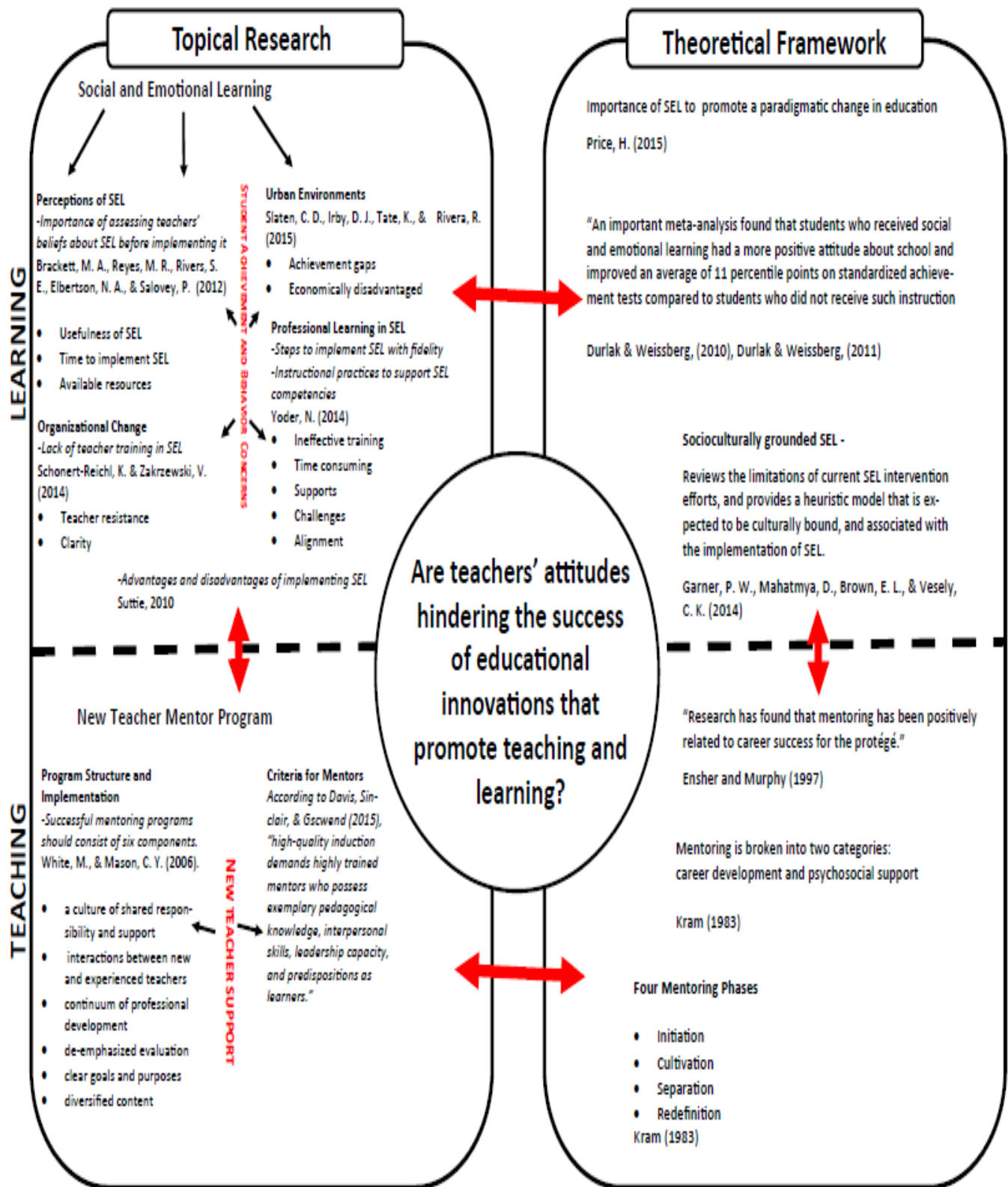
Theoretical support. Teachers have a very large influence on how their students achieve (Brackett, Reyes, Rivers, Elbertson, & Salovey, 2012). Because students spend so many hours in the classroom, it is the teachers' responsibility to ensure that all of the students' needs are met – both academic and social. The proposed evolving conceptual framework addressed previous research conducted in the field as well as theoretical frameworks with the aim of justifying the relevance and pertinence of the research topic and the need for the study I have conducted. The conceptual framework has also aided in identifying the gap in research regarding social and emotional learning in a Title I urban elementary school environment, which will be covered by the conducted study. This study was an inquiry into teachers' perceptions and attitudes of implementing an initiative; as well as an exploration of the linkage between social and emotional learning and how students learn. Although working to improve student achievement and behavior concerns, the targeted audience involved teachers who were charged with the implementation of social and emotional learning. Their beliefs about SEL were important to assess prior to allowing them to implement the program; as it could have an effect on the program's results (Brackett, Reyes, Rivers, Elbertson, & Salovey, 2012). The professional learning in social and emotional learning, as well as the environment that it is implemented in could also affect the program's implementation and results. Additionally, the teachers' reaction to the idea of change could

Perceptions in a Changing World

determine if the program was successful, and if it added to the education of the child as a whole. One of the key gaps that this conceptual framework has helped me to identify is the idea that current SEL interventions have mostly been implemented in non-urban environments (Garner, Mahatmya, Brown, & Vesely, 2014).

“Though SEL intervention programs are growing in number, they are often found to be limited in scope and the results are not uniformed” (Joseph & Strain, 2003). They have been found to be effective for some children, however, other subpopulations have not experienced such success (Garner et al., 2014). This project focused on an implementation of social and emotional learning that was culturally bound, and aimed to become a model for social and emotional learning implementation in similar environments. The conceptual framework can be further explained in the graphic below (See Figure 1), which also includes the conceptual framework on new teacher mentor programs from case study 2.

Figure 1: Cross-Case Conceptual Framework



Perceptions in a Changing World

The graphical representation of the conceptual framework includes “the system of concepts, assumptions, expectations, beliefs, and theories that supports and informs the research” (Maxwell, 2013, p. 39). The topical research that has been collected displays pre-existing research that will help to inform the new study. It also shows the relationship between the topical research and the theoretical framework, which will guide the research in this study. All of the elements shown in the visual will be thoroughly addressed in the review of literature in chapter 2.

Statement of the problem. Teachers today are faced with many challenges. They are not only confronted with the pressures of student assessment scores and severe teacher evaluations; but they must also deal with parental involvement, or lack thereof, larger classroom sizes, and undesirable student behaviors (Durlak, Weissberg, Taylor, Dymnick, & Schellinger, 2008). All of these factors play a role when considering the education of children as a whole. Moreover there has been a new push to focus on preparing students, not only for the next grade level, but for college and careers (Roe, 2015). Although most educators’ goals include preparing students to be productive adults, the new focus with common core ensures that this goal remains in the forefront, and regulates everything that drives instruction. Researchers have found that academic achievement and social and emotional competence are related and should both be focused on in order to prepare students for adulthood (Buchanan, Gueldner, Tran, & Merrell, 2009).

The literature on social and emotional learning, as we will extensively analyze in chapter 2, is actually plentiful, although it is often underrepresented in educational practice (“Collaborative for Academic”, 2015). Many sources echo the effectiveness and importance of the program, while others present significant gaps in the literature that supports the link between SEL and student success (Farnham, Fernando, Perigo, Brosman, & Tough, 2015). The gaps that demonstrate the lack of the program’s effectiveness may be due to ineffective implementations of the program. School reform

Perceptions in a Changing World

researchers suggest that programs are most likely to fail due to poor implementation rather than program weakness (Brackett, et al., 2012).

In Title I urban school settings, “the difficulty of improving student performance is frequently compounded by community and family factors beyond the control of the classroom teacher” (Pink, 1992, p. 96). However, the teacher is held responsible for student performance. Teachers in Title I urban environments struggle daily with “inadequate resources, professional isolation, classroom management issues, lack of professional support, and feeling unprepared” (Durham-Barnes, 2011, para. 1). These struggles coupled with implementing a new reform may be excessive. This qualitative case study will examine the challenges and supports encountered by elementary teachers in Title I urban environments through their lenses as they attempt to rectify a number of concerns through the implementation of social and emotional learning; including the improvement of student achievement.

Research questions. This intrinsic case study focused on SEL was designed to address the following research question:

- What do teachers perceive as both tools for support and challenges to success when implementing social and emotional learning (SEL) in a title I urban elementary school?

This question will lead to the investigation of teachers’ beliefs and attitudes towards the implementation of SEL in a title I urban school setting. It will also allow teachers to expound on their ideas of whether the program is affected by factors which may impact the program’s outcomes.

The issues (Stake, 1995), or tensions that drive the study can be found below:

- Do teachers at LJS Elementary see a relationship between social emotional competence and academic achievement?
- Is there an effective approach that can be used to manage organizational change during the adoption of SEL?

Perceptions in a Changing World

- Is there an effective method that can be used to prepare teachers to teach social emotional learning?

According to Stake, and using his approach to case studies, issues bring awareness to problems and concerns (Stake, 1995). “Issues draw us toward observing, even teasing out the problems of the case, the conflictual outpourings, the complex backgrounds of human concern” (Stake, 1995, p. 17) Issues also “help us expand upon the moment, help us see the instance in a more historical light, help us recognize the pervasive problems in human interaction” (Stake, 1995, p. 17). The issues identified in this study have helped to address the complexity involved by the research question driving the study.

Summary of the Chapter

A positive classroom environment is essential to the process of learning. Previous research regarding SEL has shown a positive relationship between the innovation and student achievement (Durlak & Weissberg 2010). Consequently, it is imperative that teachers create an environment that promotes intellectual and emotional safety. Implementing SEL effectively can assist in accomplishing this goal; however, teachers’ attitudes towards the innovation can affect how the components of SEL are being executed. This, as a result, may have an effect upon students’ acquisition of new skills and concepts. Just as students’ learning experiences are essential to achievement, so are the learning experiences of teachers. Novice teachers are still developing their pedagogical and content knowledge skills and can benefit from receiving support from a peer mentor. Many schools offer a new teacher mentoring program that novice teachers are immersed in to assist in improving teacher performance. Nonetheless, teachers’ attitudes towards the implementation of the program can influence the attainment of new skills and as a result, teaching methods may be impacted.

As educators, we understand that there is a connection between teaching and learning and therefore, it is important to explore this relationship when implementing new innovations. In this

Perceptions in a Changing World

dissertation, we sought to understand if teachers' attitudes towards innovations for teaching and learning affected the implementation of the programs. Diverse classrooms continue to change the dynamics of educational systems, causing shifts in approaches to teaching and learning. We were using Ravitch and Riggins conceptual framework to examine the concept of learning through SEL and the concept of teaching through NTM. Exploring this relationship by way of a case study approach assisted us in identifying solutions and improvements for the implementation process of both innovations; thus, having a positive impact on teaching and learning.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this literature review is to examine the current literature on social and emotional learning. The literature on social emotional learning is actually plentiful, although it is often underrepresented in educational practice (Garner et al., 2104). Many sources echo the effectiveness and importance of these kinds of programs, while others present significant gaps in the literature that support the link between social emotional learning and student success (Garner et al., 2014, Joseph & Strain, 2003).

New teacher support is an educational issue that researchers are continuously examining in an attempt to identify strategies that will develop new teachers' skills, competencies, and ultimately have a positive effect on student achievement (Choa, 1997; McCormick, Gore, & Thomas, 2006; McDonald & Flint, 2011). Several studies have been conducted to identify effective new teacher support and its impact on teacher retention and performance (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Maria-Monica & Alina, 2011; Israel, Kamman, McCray, & Sindelar, 2014; Davis, Sinclair, & Gschwend, 2015). The goal of the review is to provide a thorough understanding of social and emotional learning in order to determine what the research says about how the program impacts student learning.

Review of Literature on Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)

What is social and emotional learning? With the many differences surrounding individuals in education, it seems as if everyone has one common goal – to make improvements. Some focus on improving the quality of instruction, while others focus on improving the curriculum and the way that students process new information. Irrespective of the focus, any improvement in education would play a vital role in developing students who will grow into critical thinkers and productive citizens. Many researchers today believe “that children need more than academic training to be successful in life” (Suttie, 2011, p. 1). They sense that schools should serve dual purposes by increasing academic

Perceptions in a Changing World

achievement, but also teaching students how to “understand and manage their emotions, develop compassionate concern for others, make ethical decisions, handle conflicts constructively, and form positive relationships both inside and outside of the classroom” (Suttie, 2011, p. 1). All of these skills make up what is currently known as social and emotional learning.

“Social and emotional learning (SEL) is the process of developing students’ social emotional competencies – that is, the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors that individuals need to make successful choices” (Collaborative for Academics, Social, and Emotional Learning [CASEL], 2015, para. 2). In order for students to be successful scholars and adults, they must be proficient in five core social emotional competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship management, and responsible decision making (Yoder, 2014). Defined in the early 2000s by Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), these competencies are crucial to enhancing students’ learning and increasing their capacity to process information (Yoder, 2014):

Self-awareness. Self-awareness is “the ability to accurately recognize one’s emotions and thoughts and their influence on behavior” (“Collaborative for Academics”, 2015, para. 2). Students who are self-aware have a thorough understanding of their strengths and weaknesses, and this understanding influences their academic choices (Yoder, 2014). These students are in tune with their emotional triggers, and are capable of determining how their emotions affect others (Yoder, 2014).

Self-management. Self-management is “the ability to regulate one’s emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations” (“Collaborative for Academics”, 2015, para. 3). Students who possess self-management skills can effectively handle daily stresses, and do not allow difficult situations to affect their emotions (Yoder, 2014). They are also capable of overcoming obstacles, setting goals, and monitoring the progression of their goals (Yoder, 2014). They “exhibit positive motivation, hope, and optimism, seek help when needed, display grit, determination or perseverance, and advocate

Perceptions in a Changing World

for oneself” (Yoder, 2014, p. 3).

Social awareness. Social awareness is “the ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others from diverse backgrounds and cultures, to understand social and ethical norms for behavior, and to recognize family, school, and community resources and supports” (“Collaborative for Academics”, 2015, para. 4). Socially aware students are able to respect and appreciate the differences of their peers (Yoder, 2014). During classroom discussions, they can listen to the perspectives of others, and are also more capable of relating to characters within a variety of texts (Yoder, 2014).

Relationship skills. Relationship skills provide students with “the ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups” (“Collaborative for Academics”, 2015, para. 5). With this competency, students are able to work well with others, and have a large capacity to make friends (Yoder, 2014). They are effective communicators, and are leaders when necessary (Yoder, 2014). They also have “the ability to resist negative social pressures, resolve interpersonal conflict, and seek help when needed” (Yoder, 2014, p. 3).

“Children demonstrating social emotional competence tend to be more inquisitive and eager to learn (Rothbart & Jones, 1998, Rudasill, Gallagher, & White, 2010, as cited in Garner, et al., 2014, p. 165), are perceived as more attentive and cognitively advanced (Eisenberg, Sadovsky, Spinrod, 2005, Garner, 2010, as cited in Garner et al., 2014, p. 165), and are more aware of themselves as learners than children with lesser affective skills” (Parlakin, 2003, as cited in Garner et al., 2014, p. 165). The large amount of evidence connecting social and emotional learning to student success has encouraged the start of SEL programs in education today.

Social and Emotional Learning in Urban Environments

“Low-income and minority children are more likely than their economically advantaged white counterparts to exhibit the academic indifference and behavioral difficulties associated with social and

Perceptions in a Changing World

emotional deficits” (Price, 2015, p. 4). Impoverished children are overly exposed to violence, which leads to a number of erratic behaviors and prevents them from learning in educational environments. “Demographic trends indicates that the U.S. economy will rely increasingly on Latinos and African Americans because they, and especially the former, will comprise a steadily growing proportion of the adult workforce” (Price, 2015, p. 3). However, these economically disadvantaged children are unfailingly delayed in their academics (Price, 2015). A child’s ability to learn and grow academically, heavily relies on social and emotional competence. These traits also carry over into the workplace. Because of the strength of the work completed by previous researchers, many urban schools and districts are implementing programs that develop social and emotional competence (Price, 2015).

Social and emotional learning, and the development of the five social competencies are extremely important for students in underprivileged environments. Because students in these areas are regularly engulfed in stressful situations that deter them from learning, social emotional competencies equip them with the tools they need to “seek help when needed, manage their own emotions, and problem solve difficult situations” (Romasz, Kantor, & Elias, 2004, as cited in Yoder, 2014, p. 2). While there is a growing amount of research that indicates the positive effects of social emotional learning on low-income minority youth, “there is need to accumulate further evidence regarding the capacity of social emotional and character development programs to promote academic outcomes, especially when implemented in low-income, urban schools” (Bavarian et al., 2013, p. 772).

Successes and Failures of Social and Emotional Learning – Does SEL Really Work?

Within the last decade, social and emotional learning and other programs related to social and emotional competence have been developed and implemented throughout the U.S. (Dracinschi, 2012). “An important meta-analysis found that students who received social and emotional learning had a more positive attitude about school and improved an average of 11 percentile points on standardized

Perceptions in a Changing World

achievement tests compared to students who did not receive such instruction (Durlak & Weissberg, 2010, Durlak & Weissberg, 2011, as cited in Dracinski, 2012, p. 618). “A large-scale meta-analysis of more than 200 programs involving roughly 270,000 students from kindergarten through high school gauged the effectiveness of school-based social and emotional learning programs” (Price, 2015, p. 5). The researchers of this study reported that students receiving services provided by social and emotional learning programs demonstrated significant academic gains. “In a major review of SEL programs in schools, Durlak et al. (2011, as cited in Yoder, 2014) found that students who participated in social and emotional programs (compared with students not in social and emotional programs) demonstrated increased academic achievement, increased social and emotional skills, improved attitudes toward self and others, improved positive social behaviors, decreased conduct problems and emotional distress” (p. 5). This study showed consistent results across grade-levels, location, and types of schools (Yoder, 2014).

The body of research linking student success to social emotional competence is consistently growing (Dracinski, 2012; Yoder, 2014). Other studies have shown that “social emotional incompetence detracts from children’s ability to recall educationally relevant material (Garner et al., 2014) and, if present in early childhood, is predictive of later school dropout (Garner et al., 2014) or expulsion” (p. 165). In contrast, many researchers believe that previous studies are invalid. They claim that “past research has predominantly been based on single-informant designs, highlighting students’ own perceptions of their social and emotional skills rather than considering multiple informants” (Gil-Orlarte Marquez, Palomera Martin, & Brackett, 2006; Izard et al., 2001; Jones et al., 2011; Seider, Gilbert, Novick, & Gomez, 2013, as cited in Oberle, Schonert-Reichl, Hertzman, & Zumba, 2014, p. 138). Claims have also been made that studies showing that students made academic gains were based on results from teacher assigned grades, versus standardized tests (Oberle, et al., 2014). In their opinion,

Perceptions in a Changing World

the relationship between social and emotional learning and student success has yet to be thoroughly explored, and the cases that have been presented provide limited reliability.

This particular gap in the field helps to support the relevance of this proposed study. This study will address the question, does social and emotional learning really work, by providing additional research on the successes and failures of the program.

Student Success

When determining the effects of SEL and its impact on student success, one must understand the meaning of student success. As a term that is frequently used in discourse by educators and policy makers, many are unaware of how student success should be described (Cuseo, n.d.). “Webster’s dictionary defines success as a favorable or desired outcome” (Cuseo, n.d., para. 2). Based on this definition, student success could “be defined as a favorable or desirable student outcome” (Cuseo, n.d., para. 2), however, what makes an outcome favorable or desirable. According to Joe Cuseo (n.d.), there are seven principles of student success – personal validation, self-efficacy, sense of purpose, active involvement, reflective thinking, social integration, and self-awareness (para. 12). Many of the principles are directly linked to the five social competencies in social and emotional learning.

Researcher Jonathan Raymond (2014) believes that students cannot reach success if educators are solely focused on academics. “We must teach, model, and practice the very skills that the world demands students master: confidence, perseverance, recognizing and controlling emotions, goal-setting, empathy, civility, building and nurturing relationships, and making good decisions are essential skills for us and our children” (Raymond, 2014, para. 7). Social and emotional learning is a tool that encompasses both academic and character development for optimal student success (Raymond, 2014).

Teaching Social and Emotional Learning

The competencies of social and emotional learning can be taught, but they must be introduced in

Perceptions in a Changing World

sequenced, active, focused, and explicit ways (Guerin, 2014). In order to do so, programs selected for social and emotional learning implementation stress the five areas of competency, and consider the social and emotional learning behaviors that children have previously been exposed to by other individuals in their lives. However, when social and emotional learning is taught in school, it is delivered explicitly – similar to the teaching of other content areas. According to the Committee for Children (2016), during social and emotional learning instruction, the teacher first explains a concept; the students practice the concept; the teacher reinforces the concept throughout the week; information is sent home for students and parents to complete; the teacher checks for understanding; re-teaching is done when necessary.

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) guide provides a thorough description of programs selected to effectively teach social emotional learning. They currently have 23 listed programs including Al's Pals, I Can Problem Solve, Open Circle, and Second Step ("Collaborative for Academics", 2015). Second Step has been selected by the Atlanta Public School System, and is what will be used during the course of this study. The Second Step program stands out amongst the other programs because it has "the widest geographic dispersion" (Elias, 2013, para. 2), and developers "have committed time, creativity, and resources" (Elias, 2013, para. 2) to address social and emotional competence. The Second Step program is evidenced-based, and was created for students in preschool through middle school (Elias, 2013). "Each grade level features developmentally appropriate and sequenced ways to teach social, emotional skills such as self-regulation, empathy, emotion management, problem solving, and executive function skills" (Elias, 2013, para. 4).

With the Second Step program teachers teach one lesson per week, but continuously reinforce the skills demonstrated in that lesson throughout the week. During the weekly lesson, and throughout the course of utilizing the Second Step program, the common goal is to "decrease risk factors while

Perceptions in a Changing World

increasing protective factors – focusing on building the strengths that students already have” (“Social and Emotional”, n.d., para. 6). Although selected programs are popular and have been vetted, there are alternative methods to teach social emotional learning. “Exercises designed to promote consensus building, active listening, emotional intelligence, and problem-solving all teach SEL” (Guerin, 2014, p. 43).

The Tennessee Department of Education, along with the Center on Great Teachers and Leaders (GTL Center), and the Appalachia Regional Comprehensive Center suggest that “there are multiple ways to develop and nurture social and emotional skills and competencies, ranging from general pedagogical practices, to classroom interventions, to a whole school approach” (“Incorporating Social”, 2015, p. 6). Remembering that social and emotional learning is not only a process to develop the competencies of the students, but the adults as well, will help to implement the program with fidelity (“Incorporating Social”, 2015). Social and emotional learning focuses on teaching the whole child. “Through a systematic process described in the research-to-practice brief, *Teaching the Whole Child*, Yoder (2013, as cited in “Incorporating Social”, 2015) identified a working set of ten teaching practices that promote SEL as well as high standards for academic learning” (p. 8). The ten practices can then be a group into practices that focus on social development, and practices that focus on social development, and practices that focus on instructional development. “When teachers enact and students participate in these teaching practices, students and teachers are able to develop their social and emotional skills and apply these skills to create a more productive and supportive schooling experience” (“Incorporating Social”, 2015, p. 8).

Training Teachers in Social and Emotional Learning

According to a Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) report, 83% of teachers are in need of training in social and emotional learning (Schonert-Reichl & Zakrzewski,

Perceptions in a Changing World

2014). Social and emotional learning training for teachers is essential, and directly aligned to student success. A separate study showed that teachers who did not buy into the social and emotional learning curriculum worsened their students' skills in social and emotional learning (Schonert-Reichl & Zakrzewski, 2014).

The following three categories are suggested for use when preparing social and emotional learning training for teachers:

- “Social and emotional learning of students”;
- “Social and emotional competencies of teachers”; and
- “The learning context, including classroom management, school-wide coordination, and supporting school-family-community partnerships” (Schonert-Reichl & Zakrzewski, 2014, para. 5).

Researchers Kim Schonert-Reichl and Vicki Zakrzewski (2014) recommend utilizing a three-pronged approach in order to integrate social and emotional learning in professional learning. Teachers must first be introduced to social and emotional learning – “what it is, the science behind it, and how to use it to structure lessons” (Schonert-Reichl & Zakrzewski, 2014, para. 10). They must also learn how to effectively implement SEL strategies, and use selected SEL programs to create positive learning environments (Schonert-Reichl & Zakrzewski, 2014).

Tom Roderick, a developer of many popular social and emotional learning programs such as the 4 Rs Program and the Resolving Conflict Creatively Program, believes that teachers struggle with social and emotional learning because they have not been properly trained (Bouffard, 2014; Schonert-Reichl & Zakrzewski, 2014; Suttie, 2011). He researched a pilot program “funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Education’s Institute for Education Sciences that provided one-on-one SEL support for teachers” (Bouffard, 2014, para. 7). The program involved 33 teachers in grades third through fifth, and

Perceptions in a Changing World

a number of coaches to provide monthly social and emotional learning sessions and regular feedback. The coaches were also able to model lessons, conduct classroom observations, and monitor student and teacher improvements. The pilot program enabled teachers to gain an understanding of social and emotional learning, as well as how to teach the program effectively. They also learned the importance of reinforcing social and emotional learning throughout the day (Bouffard, 2014).

This literature review substantiates the need to uncover the impact that social and emotional learning has on student and academic success in Title I urban environments. As highlighted in the literature, the need for increased evidence regarding social and emotional learning exists, and this project strives to add to the growing body of evidence.

Summary of literature on teacher mentoring programs. Griffin, Winn, Otis-Wilborn, & Kilgore (2003), described six components as contributing factors in a successful mentoring program: (a) a culture of shared responsibility and support; (b) interactions between new and experienced teachers, (c) continuum of professional development, (d) de-emphasized evaluation, (e) clear goals and purposes, and (f) diversified content (Cited by White & Mason, 2006). Developing activities and professional learning sessions that consist of these components can offer novice teachers strategies to implement during their early years of teaching. In addition to relevant and meaningful professional development activities, pairing new teachers with a good mentor has also proven to be effective. In a study conducted by Hennissen, Crasborn, Brouwer, Korthagen, & Bergen (2011), the perceptions of pre-service teachers about the support that was provided by their mentors was examined. The pre-service teachers described the following mentor skills as offering emotional support: summarizing content, giving positive opinion, showing attentive behavior, showing genuineness, summarizing feeling, and giving information. This study implicates that in addition to learning strategies related to content and delivery, novice teachers also need emotional support from their mentors.

Summary of Literature

This review of literature validates the need for further research regarding the impact of social and emotional learning on student success in Title I urban environments as perceived by the teachers who are charged with implementing the program. The review of literature also shows that implementing a new teacher mentor program can provide additional support to novice teachers. SEL allows students to “understand and manage their emotions, develop compassionate concern for others, make ethical decisions, handle conflicts constructively, and form positive relationships both inside and outside of the classroom” (Suttie, 2011, p. 1). An existing body of research links student success to social emotional competence, and supports the idea that social and emotional learning is what is needed to prepare students for success. Other researchers, however, believe that previous studies are invalid, and that the relationships between social and emotional learning and student success has yet to be explored. The literature implicates a need for further research regarding the implementation and outcomes of social and emotional learning.

As will be shown in chapters 4 and 5, as solitary researchers, both studies have demonstrated elements that are essential to examine. However, the multiple case study served as a collective effort to impact not only teachers’ attitudes towards the implementation of SEL and NTM programs, but also how their attitudes affected the outcomes of those programs, which in turn affected teaching and learning. As both studies were intertwined, authentic results were attained - both individually and collectively. The cross-case study placed more emphasis on the collective results, which extended beyond the individual studies and aimed to enhance future inquiries. The cross-case study can be further explained in the graphical representation on page 7 (See Figure 1). The figure illustrates the way the conceptual frameworks supporting both intrinsic case studies can be combined in order to support the multiple case study.

Chapter 3: Methodology

As the researchers investigated tensions that existed separately in each case study, there was also a need to investigate a common tension between both cases: Are teachers' attitudes hindering the success of educational innovations that promote teaching and learning? This qualitative multiple case study sought to determine if the teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards SEL and NTM were affecting the implementation of the programs. Analyzing data from both cases assisted the researchers in identifying strategies to resolve this common tension.

For this study we collected data from a total of nine participants. Both researchers used three modes of data collection: Case study 1 used interviews and observational notes to gather data, while case study 2 used interviews, a focus group, and observational notes to collect data. The researchers also used two formal methods to collect data during the collaboration process: research journal entries and audio recordings of the researchers' conversations.

Case Study 1: Teachers' Perceptions on Implementing Social and Emotional Learning in a Southern Title I Elementary School

Worldview of the researcher. "Qualitative research is a form of social inquiry that focuses on the way people interpret and make sense of their experiences and the world in which they live" (Holloway, 1997, p. 2). My understanding of the world is heavily informed by my experiences and ability to glean a substantial amount of knowledge through the experiences of others. My worldview is closely aligned with social constructivism (Creswell, 2013). "In this worldview, individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work. They develop subjective meanings of their experiences – meanings directed toward certain objects or things" (Creswell, 2013, p. 20). Though my experiences help me to arrive at a full level of understanding, I am aware that not everyone will agree, or share that same level of understanding.

Perceptions in a Changing World

As a researcher, active listening and asking questions are two communication techniques that are essential to honing in on the participants' responses without mentally generating patterns of meaning (Creswell, 2013). Paraphrasing statements and asking open-ended questions will give me the opportunity to obtain meaningful responses that encompass my participants' personal knowledge and personal feelings. In qualitative research, asking broad, or general questions is recommended so that the "participants can construct the meaning of a situation, a meaning typically forged in discussions or interactions with other persons" (Creswell, 2013, p. 21). During the open-ended questioning, the researcher is encouraged to "listen carefully to what people say or do in their life setting" (Creswell, 2013, p. 21). The social interactions help the researchers to not only listen to the participants, but to also focus on other personal factors that impact how the participants' meaning is constructed. The social constructivist worldview will give me the ability to interpret the meanings of others, as well as embody my personal experiences, which gives me the capacity to bring insights into my research that will not be found in any other study.

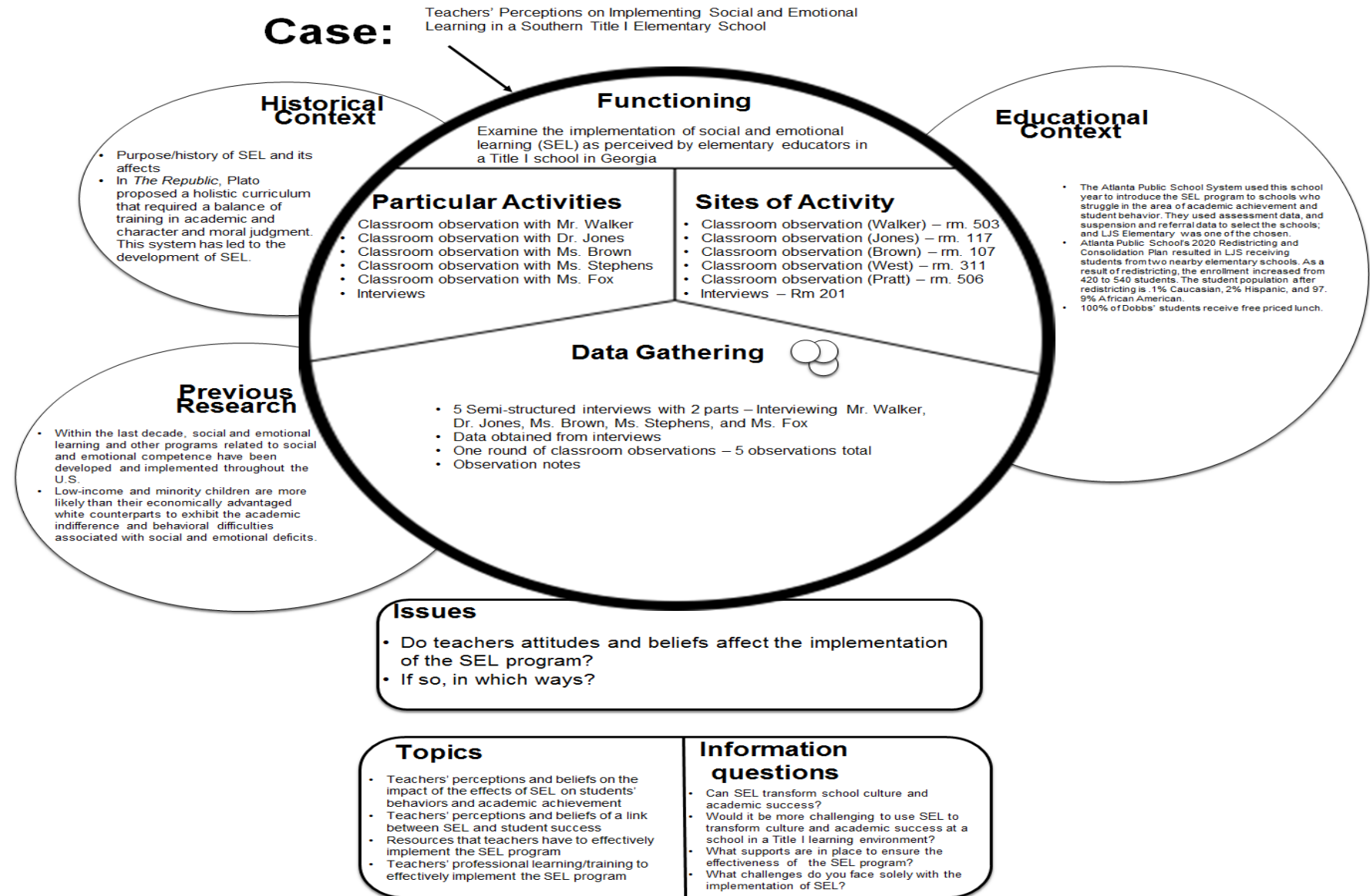
Justification of the Research Tradition Selected

A qualitative approach was more appropriate for this study because the researcher's worldview required interpretive methods, as well as the social and complex nature of the phenomenon under study. Moreover, data was not collected quantitatively on instruments, but rather through the use of observations and open-ended questioning (Creswell, 2014). Specifically, the case study research tradition was followed because it was the most appropriate method related to the topic of study (Stake, 1995). Case study research is an approach "in which the investigator explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information, and reports a case description and case themes" (Creswell, 2013, p. 97). The researcher is studying a bounded system as it naturally evolves. There are

Perceptions in a Changing World

three different variations in types of case studies: intrinsic case studies, instrumental case studies, and collective case studies (Stake, 1995; Creswell, 2013). An intrinsic case study is a design “in which the focus is on the case itself because the case presents an unusual or unique situation” (Creswell, 2013, p. 99). An intrinsic case study design (See Figure 2) has been conducted to highlight teachers’ attitudes towards the implementation of social and emotional learning, which has a completely different focus from the other study included in the proposal. However, in order to reach a further comprehension of teachers’ attitudes towards the implementation of innovations, a collective case study, or multiple case study will also be studied by merging the previous two.

Figure 2: Intrinsic Case Study - Social and Emotional Learning

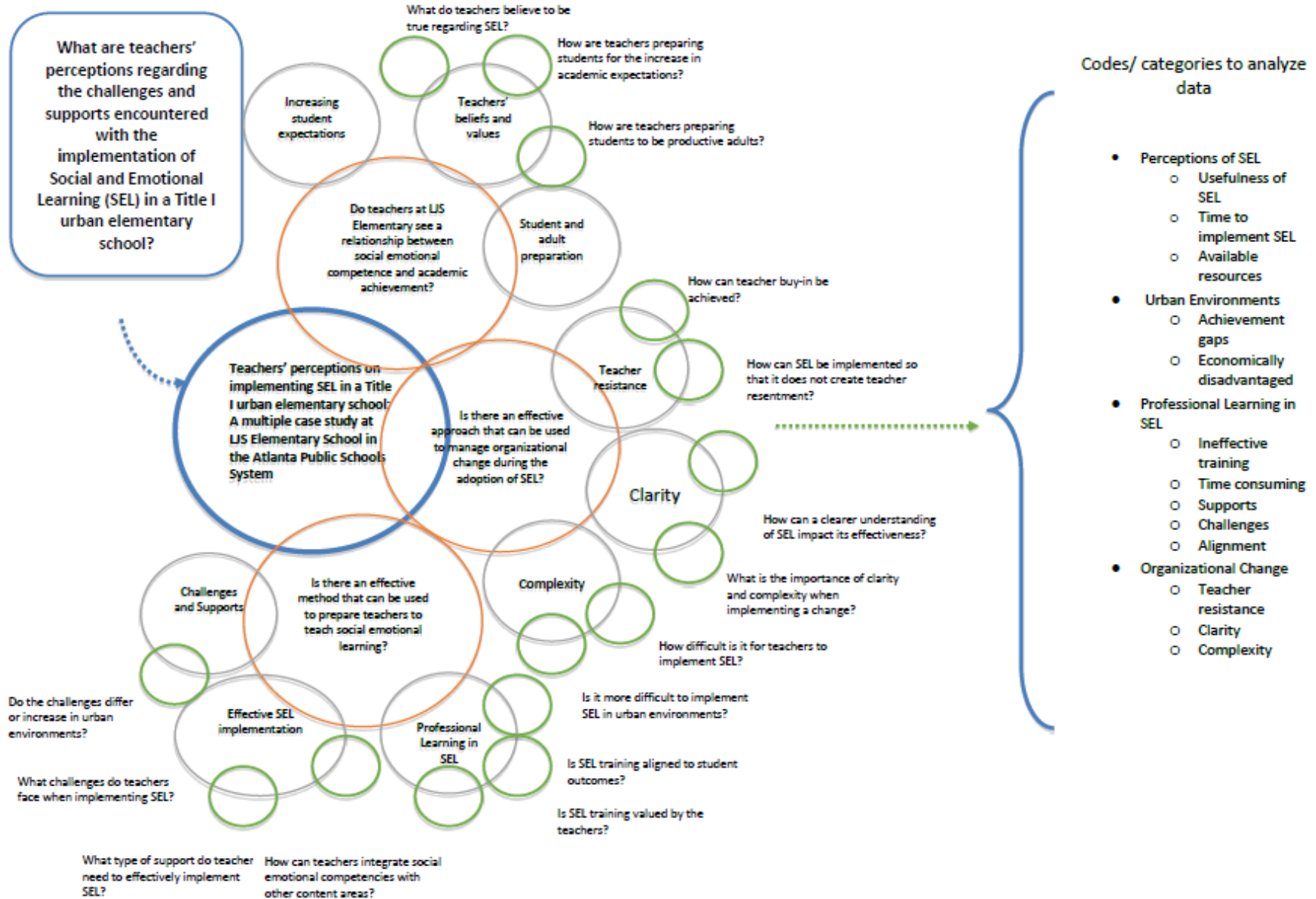


As participants are involved in the implementation of social and emotional learning, I will be working to “show different perspectives on the issue” (Creswell, 2013, p. 99). Aiming to explore teachers’ perceptions of the implementation of SEL, semi-structured interviews (See Interview Protocol in Appendix A) have been used to gain an understanding of the participants’ perceptions through their experiences. A group of five teachers, all employed at the same Title I urban elementary school in Atlanta, were asked “open-ended questions minimizing categorical and yes-no questions” (Stake, 2010, p. 90) and observed (See Observation Protocol in Appendix B) so that I could directly see data related to the narratives shared during the interviews. In order to analyze the data, I highlighted “significant statements, sentences, or quotes” (Creswell, 2013, p. 61) in order to provide an understanding of how the participants experienced the phenomenon. Next, I developed clusters of meaning from the significant statements and themes in order to write “descriptions of what the participants experienced” (Creswell, 2013, p. 61), both textural and structural, and in order to develop a composite description that captures the “essence of the participants experiences” (Creswell, 2013, p. 61).

With the intention of clarifying and developing ideas about my study, I used the Anticipated Data Reduction (See Figure 3), which is a “strategy to determine different levels” in the selected research question (Miles & Huberman, 1994, as cited in EDRS 9100, n.d., p. 22). It is also a strategy that helps connect the theoretical research questions during the study with the actual analysis of data. The process included designing a research question; developing a case in which the context of the study was clearly defined; defining issues and topics to help illuminate the complexity of the issues; and developing information questions that guide the conducted interviews; and finally, developing a set of etic categories of analysis to make sense of the collected data (EDRS 9100, n.d.).

Figure 3. Anticipated Data Reduction for the Proposed Study

ANTICIPATED DATA REDUCTION – Tiana Covington Holmes



In review, the purpose of the Anticipated Data Reduction was to help establish different levels in research questions (Miles & Huberman, 1994). “Data reduction refers to the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming the data that appear in written up field notes or transcriptions” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 10). In order to better manage the data, it must be summarized, or reduced, so that it can be comprehensible, and directly related to the identified issues. As evidenced by my Anticipated Data Reduction, my research question aimed to determine what teachers’ perceptions were regarding the challenges and supports encountered with the implementation of social and emotional learning. My tensions under analysis that will drive the study included determining if the teachers saw a relationship between social and emotional competence and academic achievement; if the teachers saw an alternative in the organizational implementation/adoption of social and emotional learning; and if the teachers saw an effective method that can be used to prepare themselves to teach social and emotional learning.

Context & Participants

L.J.S. Elementary School (pseudonym) opened on August 3, 2004. The staff includes one principal, one assistant principal, two instructional coaches, one counselor, one response to intervention (RTI) specialist, one media specialist, thirty-four homeroom teachers, four special education teachers, and eleven auxiliary staff members. Out of all fifty-six employees, fifty are African American, two are Hispanic, one is Armenian, and three are White American.

The school district’s 2020 Redistricting and Consolidation Plan resulted in L.J.S. Elementary receiving students from two nearby elementary schools. As a result of redistricting, the enrollment increased from 420 to 540 students. The student population after redistricting is .1% White American, 2% Hispanic, and 97.9% African American. One hundred percent of the school’s students receive free and/or reduced price lunch. Because of this high percentage, the students also receive an additional fresh

Perceptions in a Changing World

fruit or vegetable at 2:00 pm as a snack before dismissal. Two percent of the student population are English Language Learners (ELL). Seven percent of the students receive Exceptional Education Services (SWD).

L.J.S. Elementary is located in southeast suburbs of a large city on the border line of a surrounding city. The school faces a cemetery and is in very close proximity to the many correctional facilities. The average income for families in this area is less than \$18,000 annually. The school is also currently on the list for the Georgia Senate's school takeover plan because of poor test scores and low College and Career Readiness Performance Index (CCRPI) scores.

I have chosen to conduct my study in this particular school because of the current school-wide focus on social and emotional learning. This school was one of the twelve schools selected by the district to implement the program due to its low achievement scores and high percentages in student discipline referrals. The teachers and other staff members are aware of the district's implementation plan, the adoption of the social and emotional learning curriculum, and the professional learning sessions that they are required to attend. They have been assigned a district SEL coach to ensure that they are supported throughout the program's implementation. I am currently employed at L.J.S. Elementary School, and will use this to gain access to the site and the participants.

Decisions regarding participant selection "are based on the research questions, theoretical perspectives, and evidence informing the study" (Sargeant, 2012, para. 5). The participant selection will be purposeful (Maxwell, 2008), and only involve individuals who can enhance the research and understanding of the phenomenon (Sargeant, 2012). The population selected to be participants for this study are elementary teachers in grades kindergarten through fifth, and are involved in implementing social and emotional learning in a Title I urban elementary school in Atlanta, GA. These teachers should be able to inform the research question and provide valuable insight regarding their perceptions on the

Perceptions in a Changing World

implementation of social and emotional learning. A sample of five teachers will be “used to capture adequately the heterogeneity in the population. The goal here is to ensure that the conclusions adequately represent the entire range of variation rather than only the typical members or some subset of this range” (Maxwell, 2008, p. 235). This sample size is sufficient considering the required amount of information needed to satisfy all areas of the research.

The most relevant strategy for sampling in this study is criterion sampling. “Criterion sampling works well when all individuals studied represent people who have experience the phenomenon” (Creswell, 2013, p. 155). It is a technique that involves selecting cases that meet a predetermined criterion of importance (Patton, 2002). The following criteria was used to select participants for this study: (a) teachers of grades kindergarten through fifth, (b) teachers who are employed at L.J.S. Elementary, (c) teachers who are implementing social and emotional learning. These criteria will give me the opportunity to select participants “whose study will illuminate the questions under study” (Patton, 1990, p. 169).

“Duke (1984) recommends studying 3 to 10 subjects” in a case study approach, and Polkinhorne (1989) recommends studying 5 to 25 (as cited in Creswell, 2013, p. 157). The number of selected participants assured that the information received was rich, and provided detailed descriptions of the participants’ experiences to add credibility to the research (Patton, 1990; Creswell, 2013). I am currently employed at the site in which I will conduct my research. This helped with gaining access to the site and the participants. This also helped with the recruitment process, considering that a rapport has already been established between myself and my colleagues. Because I know the types of teachers who work in the building, I only recruited those who would be open and honest during the interviews. I sent the selected participants an invitation to participate in the study via email; and upon acceptance, they received a form so that written consent could be obtained.

Data Gathering Methods

“Case study data collection involves a wide array of procedures as the researcher builds an in-depth picture of the case” (Creswell, 2013, p. 162) - interviews and participant observations. The interview questions selected were created in order to allow participants to describe the meaning of social and emotional learning and their experiences with implementing the program.

The informants participated in one round of semi-structured interviews with two parts. “A key purpose of qualitative interviews broadly is to elicit the experiences, perceptions, and feelings of the research participant/s” (Edwards & Holland, 2013, p. 53). Through conversation, or dialogue, I explored the experiences of the participants, and uncovered the understandings that the participants used to make sense of their worlds (Hatch, 2002; Janesick, 2004; Rubin & Rubin, 2005). In qualitative research, the researcher is used as the main instrument in data collection (Stake, 2010). The researcher is responsible for connecting with the participants and using the questions and dialogue to relate to the participants’ experiences. The participants are more prone to being open and willing to share their experiences when the researcher presents him/herself as an open, honest, accepting, and fair individual (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). This set the tone of the interview and helped to create an environment that was comfortable for both parties.

“Several authors have advanced the steps necessary in conducting qualitative interviews, such as Kvale and Brinkman (2009), and Rubin and Rubin (2012)” (Creswell, 2013, p. 163). I followed the steps for interviewing as outlined by John W. Creswell (2013) beginning with deciding on the interview questions. My interview questions were pulled from my Anticipated Data Reduction (see Figure 3), which was the strategy used prior to beginning the research process. My interview questions were open-ended, general, and focused on gaining an understanding from my participants (see Appendix A). As mentioned, my participants were selected through purposeful sampling, and participated in one-on-one

Perceptions in a Changing World

interview sessions; therefore I selected interviewees who were open and were not reluctant to speak on the topic of study (Creswell, 2013). When conducting the interviews, I used *Ethos*, the ethnographic observation system, to record my interviews or make any voice notes as I was conducting interviews (“Ethos”, 2016). This tool additionally assisted with transcribing, as the files were exported to pdf files.

The interview protocol (see Appendix A) was used to guide the interview and assist the participant in discussing the phenomenon. The participants partook in one interview with two parts. Part I of the interview allowed me to gain information about the participants’ experiences with social and emotional learning outside of the current school environment, gather information about training or professional learning in SEL, and inquire about their beliefs in SEL. I asked the participants about any challenges that they had faced with SEL, and if any of those challenges were due to working in a Title I urban environment. I also elicited information about past experiences with Title I urban environments and social and emotional learning, and if the participants envisioned themselves working in Title I urban environments in the future; as well as with SEL. The questions were open-ended, and required the participant to illustrate their responses with examples. Part II of the interview asked the participants to reconstruct a day in their life as a teacher by writing a narrative describing what happens from the time that they awake until nightfall. The narrative was written prior to the interview so that it could be discussed during the interview. Both parts of the interview took approximately 60-90 minutes to complete.

At the conclusion of the interview, observations were used to collect data. “Observation is one of the key tools for collecting data in qualitative research. It is the act of noting a phenomenon in the field setting through the five senses of the observer, often with an instrument, and recording it for scientific purposes” (Creswell, 2013, p. 166). I have created and used two observation tools, as well as an observation protocol that outlines the role of the observer (see Appendix B). Tool I was used to script

Perceptions in a Changing World

and make notes of the events occurring within the classroom environments, and tool II was used to notate the practices associated with social and emotional learning. The information gathered from the observations were used to collect information on how the teacher interacted with his/her students, and how social and emotional learning was being implemented. The information collected during the observations was an additional source of data that was triangulated with the data collected during the interviews to further validate the findings. During the observations, I acted as an outsider, utilizing the “nonparticipant/observer as participant” model, in which I solely watched, recorded, and took notes, without being directly involved with the class (Creswell, 2013).

Data Analysis

“Data analysis in qualitative research consists of preparing and organizing the data for analysis, then reducing the data into themes through a process of coding and condensing the codes, and finally representing the data in figures, tables, or a discussion” (Creswell, 2013, p. 180). Because the data collection and data analysis are oftentimes done simultaneously in qualitative research, I used the Google Chrome Transcription Application to transcribe the interviews immediately following each completed interview (“Transcribe”, 2015; Creswell, 2013). “Qualitative researchers often learn by doing”, therefore, as the interviews are transcribed, I reviewed the material and determined if any questions needed to be added or altered for subsequent interviews (Creswell, 2013, p. 182). During this time, I also wrote notes and memos to record key concepts, as well as my reactions to and reflections on the data. This has helped me to describe the experiences, suspending all personal judgments, and focus on the essence of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). This has also helped me to form codes or categories to better manage the massive amounts of data that was collected. “The process of coding involves aggregating the text or visual data into small categories of information, seeking evidence for the code from different databases being used in a study, and then assigning a label to the code” (Creswell, 2013,

p. 184). I used open coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) and the computer program Atlas.ti (see Appendix F) to assist me with organizing, analyzing, and interpreting my data (“Atlas.ti”, 2016). Once all of my notes were transcribed, I used Atlas.ti to create a hermeneutic unit (“Atlas.ti”, 2016). This unit contained all of my data as well as any categories, memos, families, and codes that I created.

Strategies to Ensure Trustworthiness

Although the trustworthiness of qualitative research is oftentimes questioned, several researchers have shown how to make qualitative research more trustworthy (Shenton, 2004). In pursuit of a trustworthy study, I followed Guba’s (1981) criteria that has helped to ensure the trustworthiness of my findings – (a) credibility, (b) transferability, (c) dependability, and (d) confirmability (as cited in Shenton, 2004). To ensure that my study was credible, I reviewed successful previous projects comparable to mine. I also used multiple sources of data in order to use triangulation to prevent shortcomings and verify the details of the study. This has also helped with the concept of confirmability. It is here that the researcher must confirm that the findings represent the experiences of the participants, rather than personal experiences. I wrote memos and notes throughout the collection of data, as well as kept a reflexive journal in order to continuously reflect on my relationship with the participants, and if that relationship affected their responses (Fischer, 2009). I also used triangulation to help to make the findings more credible by using more than one data source.

Credibility is also established through the selection of the participants. I ensured that my participants were given the opportunity to accept or decline my offer to join the study, and I have previously established a professional rapport with my participants. This added to the credibility of the research because it ensured that all of the participants were willing to take part in the study, and was open about their experiences. If I suspected any dishonesty from any of the participants, I discarded of their data (Shenton, 2004). I also shared any personal and professional information regarding social and

Perceptions in a Changing World

emotional learning and its implementation. I was certain that my experiences did not affect the experiences of my participants.

Transferability means that the findings in one study can be transferred, or applied to other situations in a naturalistic generalization fashion (Shenton, 2004; Stake, 2010). In the past it was believed that findings in qualitative research could not be transferable because it related to a narrow amount of individuals and environments. However, Stake (1994) and Denscombe (1998) suggests that transferability is possible in qualitative research (as cited in Shenton, 2004). In order to ensure that my research is transferable, I provided a rich description of what is being investigated in my research in an effort to “allow readers to have a proper understanding of it, thereby enabling them to compare the instances of the phenomenon described in the research report with those that they have seen emerge in their situations” (Shenton, 2004, p. 70). I was also sure to include a thorough description of the context in which my study took place, the data collection methods, a description of the participants, and time frame that the study occurred in order to produce transferable results. Because of my selected topic of study, my findings may not apply to contexts different from mine. However, other individuals in different contexts can learn from my findings and apply that knowledge to their own schools.

When checking the dependability of a study, one is looking to see how the research was carried out. From selecting participants to interpreting and reporting findings, the research must remain consistent. The dependability of my study was included throughout the different sections outlined in my research where I explained “the research design and its implementation; the operational detail of data gathering; and the reflective appraisal of the project” (Shenton, 2004, p. 71-72). The Anticipated Data Reduction (See Figure 3), and the use of other methodological devices, such as Stake’s graphical representation, or the interview and observation protocols, were also be used to help with the dependability of my study.

Ethics

Several strategies were used to prevent the ethical challenges that occur in qualitative research. Prior to conducting the research, I ensured that all approvals have been cleared from Kennesaw State's Institutional Review Board (IRB), as well as Georgia's Board of Education Research Review Board. I also ensured that any potential and selected participants were aware that their participation was voluntary. Participants were also informed about the purpose of the research, as well as their right to privacy and anonymity (Lichtman, 2011). Because I am currently employed at the site in which the research was conducted, a professional rapport with my participants has previously been established, and has helped with providing a trustworthy environment to complete the interviews (Lichtman, 2011). This has also allowed the participants to be open and honest with their experiences with social and emotional learning.

During the study, I avoided participating in any inappropriate behaviors with my participants, including improper relationships and friendships (Lichtman, 2011). This has helped with escaping the need to inflict any of my personal beliefs and biases on my participants. Prior to conducting the research, I was sure that the most appropriate research method had been selected related to the topic of study; and while collecting data, I avoided sharing with individuals who were not a part of the research. I also kept collected data secure and locked on a password protected computer. Additionally, I "analyzed data in a manner that avoided misstatements, misinterpretations, or fraudulent analysis" (Lichtman, 2011, p. 57). Lastly, I was be sure to acknowledge all other sources of research when presenting my study.

Case Study 2: Providing Support to New Teachers in a Dedicated Mentoring Program

This qualitative study sought to understand the novice teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of the new teacher mentor program at a selected middle school in the Southeastern region of the US.

Perceptions in a Changing World

Qualitative data was collected through individual interviews, focus groups, and anecdotal observational notes. The data was analyzed and the findings were used to make improvements to the new teacher mentor program.

Research questions.

1. How can the experiences of novice teachers be used to improve a new teacher mentor program in a local school?
2. According to the perceptions of novice teachers, what does it mean to effectively implement a new teacher mentor program at a local school?
3. Are the teachers' perceptions of the mentor program at FMS influencing its implementation? If so, how can we use them to improve the mentoring program?

Cross Case: Description of the Convergence of both Research Designs to Illuminate Teachers'

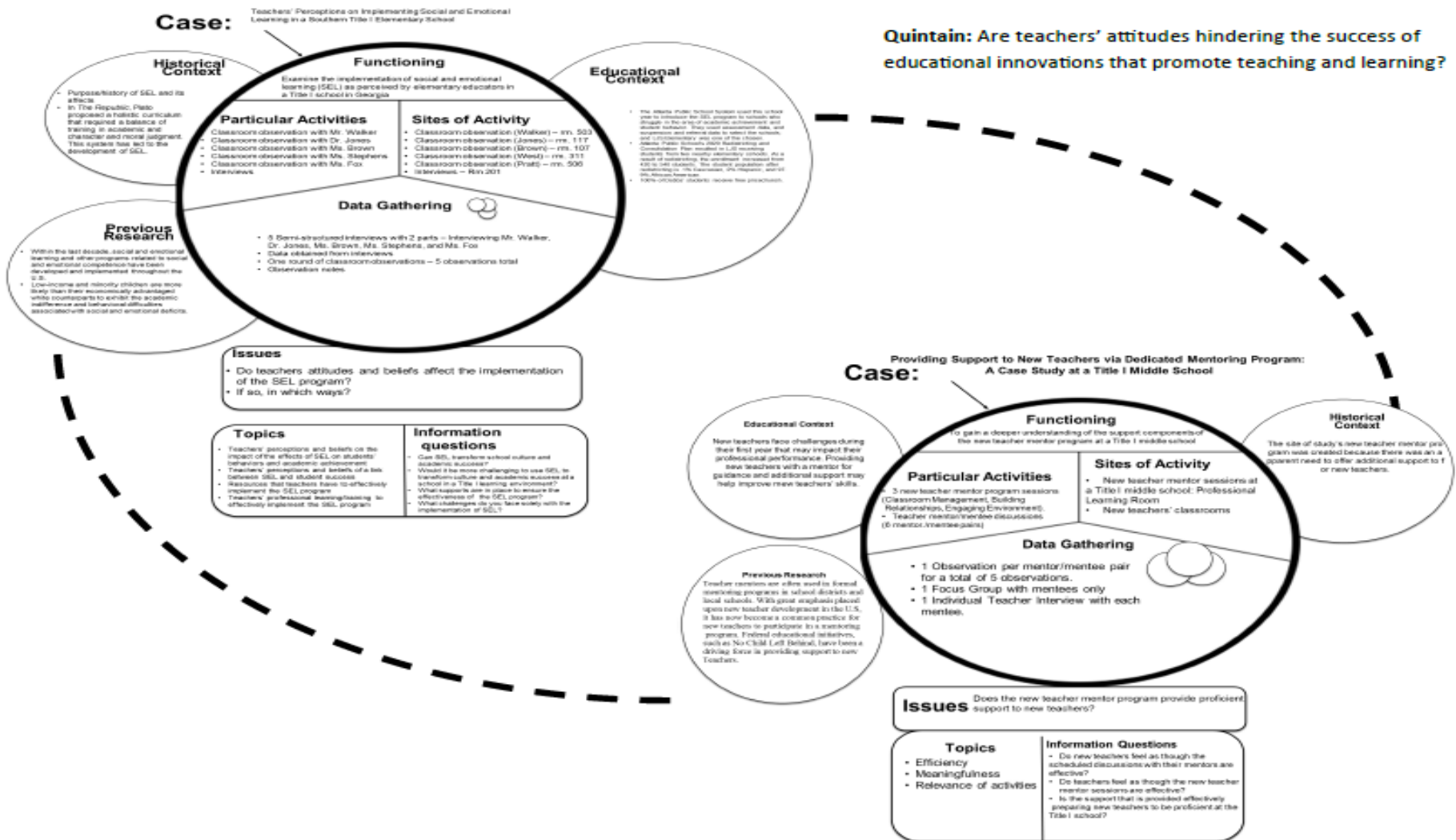
Attitudes Toward the Implementation of Educational Programs

Although both researchers are utilizing the qualitative intrinsic case study approach, the data was integrated to address the cross-case research question that could not be illuminated by one of the cases composing this multiple study: Are teachers' attitudes hindering the success of educational innovations that promote teaching and learning? Because social and emotional learning focuses on student outcomes, the researcher used the collected data to emphasize the position of 'learning' in the cross-case research. New teacher mentor programs, on the other hand, addressed the position of 'teaching' in the cross-case research. This multiple case study has helped the researchers conduct a cross-case analysis in order to illuminate the general topic of the dissertation "Teachers' attitudes towards the implementation of innovations" which would be impossible by using any of the cases in a separate fashion. The differences between the two programs were apparent; however finding the relationship between the two enhanced and strengthened the researchers' efforts to determine if the attitudes of teachers truly impacted the

Perceptions in a Changing World

successes and failures of educational innovations - which were necessary to improve teaching and learning.

Figure 4: Cross-Case - Multiple Case Study



Chapter 4: Findings

The purpose of this study was to examine the implementation of social and emotional learning (SEL) as perceived by elementary educators in an urban title I school in Georgia. The findings from the study offer a comprehensive stance of the participants' experiences with social and emotional learning, illustrate information gathered about training or professional learning in SEL, and identify the supports and challenges that the participants' faced during the implementation of SEL. Five elementary teachers participated in semi-structured individual interviews and one classroom observation over a span of a two months during the 2017 academic school year. Additional data were gathered in reflexive journal entries written by the researcher in order to reflect continuously throughout the data collection process. Observational notes were taken during five classroom observations, as well as during interviews in order to obtain information pertinent to the research proposal.

The findings presented in this chapter will contribute to partially illuminate the research question driving the overall multiple case study:

- Are teachers' attitudes hindering the success of educational innovations that promote teaching and learning?

However, findings will be focused on responding to the research question driving our particular case:

- What do teachers perceive as both tools for support and challenges to success when implementing social and emotional learning (SEL) in a title I urban elementary school?

The findings will be presented in accordance with the issues/tensions helping address the complexity of our study, which were described in the anticipated data reduction strategy presented in chapter 3:

- Do teachers at LJS Elementary (pseudonym) see a relationship between social emotional competence and academic achievement?

Perceptions in a Changing World

- Is there an effective approach that can be used to manage organizational change during the adaption of SEL?
- Is there an effective method that can be used to prepare teachers to teach social and emotional learning?

Process Followed

I began collecting data in April 2017. The case study collection of data began with one round of semi-structured interviews with two parts (see Appendix A), which were designed to engage each participant in conversations about their experiences with SEL in an urban, title I environment. The dates and the informants who were interviewed can be found below:

Table 1. Participants (pseudonyms), Grade-Levels, Years of Experience, Years Implementing SEL, Years Employed at the Site, Date of Interview, and Date of Observations

Participant	Grade-Level	Experience	# of Years Implementing SEL	# of Years Employed at Site	Date of Interview	Date of Observation
<i>Ms. Brown</i>	1 st	17 years	3	4	4/28/2017	5/01/2017
<i>Ms. Fox</i>	2 nd	23 years	3	4	5/9/2017	5/10/2017
<i>Dr. Jones</i>	3 rd	25 years	3	4	4/27/2017	5/17/2017
<i>Mr. Walker</i>	4 th	18 years	3	4	5/17/2017	5/22/2017
<i>Ms. Stephens</i>	5 th	7 years	3	4	5/9/2017	5/23/2017

During the course of the study, I kept a reflexive journal in order to take notes and reflect on my relationship with the participants, and determine if that relationship affected their responses as recommended by Fischer (2009). All interview documents and notes were transcribed using the Google Chrome Transcription Application and *Ethos*, the ethnographic observation system (“Transcribe”, 2015; “Ethos”, 2016). They were then uploaded to Atlas.ti in order to create a hermeneutic unit, and saved in a

Perceptions in a Changing World

password protected computer (“Atlas.ti”, 2016). All handwritten documents and notes were placed in color-coded folders, and locked in a file cabinet in my home.

I discussed meeting times with each of the participants, in order to review the consent to participate forms, and to verify their willingness to participate in the study. Once each consent form was signed, each participant signed up for an interview and observation date and time. The interviews occurred prior to the observations so that the data collected during the interviews could better focus the observations. The observations also served as an additional source of data that was triangulated with the data collected during the interviews to further validate the findings. Each interview was audio-recorded with *Ethos*, and additional notes were made in my reflexive journal, as well as voice notes as the interviews were conducted (“Ethos”, 2016). Each interview was also transcribed using the Google Chrome Transcription Application and saved on a password protected computer (“Transcribe”, 2015). During the transcription process, the audio-recorded interview was replayed to ensure that the transcription was accurate. The transcripts were reviewed to determine if any questions needed to be added or altered for subsequent interviews. The transcripts were also printed to be locked in a secure file-cabinet, and emailed to the participants to review for accuracy. None of the questions were altered, and none of the participants requested to make changes to their transcripts.

The written round of the interviews were immediately reviewed by myself and the participants. The interview transcript was then placed in color-coded folders, and locked in a secure file-cabinet. At the conclusion of the interviews, observations were used to collect additional data. Two observation tools were created, as well as an observation protocol that outlines the role of the observer (see Appendix B). Both tools and the protocol were shared with the participants. The observations were recorded; and following the observation, the recordings were uploaded and saved on a password protected computer. The observation notes, as well as the written section of the interviews were scanned

Perceptions in a Changing World

and uploaded onto my password protected computer. The handwritten documents were locked in a secure file cabinet in my home. For more details, see chapter 3, Data Gathering Methods.

Throughout the next subsections of this chapter, I will use excerpts from interview transcripts to support the interpretations of my data. Because the participants' statements are written as they were spoken, the excerpts may include the jargon of the participant, or broken English. All of the excerpts refer to the participants by their pseudonyms.

Do Teachers at LJS Elementary see a Relationship between Social and Emotional Competence and Academic Achievement?

Because teachers are primarily responsible for implementing SEL directly to students, their attitudes toward the program should be acknowledged in order to possibly improve the program's outcomes. Not one of the participants had any experience with social and emotional learning outside of the current site, yet with the little amount of exposure to SEL that they have received, they all agreed that SEL has the ability to transform school culture and academic success. This speaks to the positive outcomes that they have seen through the implementation of SEL thus far. Ms. Brown commented that social and emotional learning "teaches the kids how to show empathy for one another, and it builds community within the classroom; which basically helps them with working together, and achieving their goals that they set for themselves throughout the day" (April 28, 2017, lines 26-28). Dr. Jones also attributes the progressive changes that she has seen in her students' behavior and academics to social and emotional learning:

With the implementation of SEL, I have seen a change in some of my students' behavior, as well as their academics. I know that if we continue with SEL, and we do it the right way, our students could really thrive. The culture that our students are accustomed to is toxic. They don't know how to get along with one another or communicate appropriately with one another. They talk

Perceptions in a Changing World

mean to each other, and can't really express themselves, because they've never been taught how to. I know that SEL can help them to learn how to change their culture, and their ways of thinking. (April 27, 2017, lines 27-33)

Mr. Walker, Ms. Stephens, and Ms. Fox all acknowledged that SEL can transform school culture and academic success if it is implemented appropriately and with fidelity.

Urban environments. “Today, one out of four American children attends school in an urban district; one out of every six American children lives in poverty; and, two-thirds or more of the children fail to reach even the ‘basic’ level of achievement on national tests” (Gehrke, 2005, p. 14). It is in urban schools that there is a significant gap between what is expected of students and what is provided, as far as resources and teacher quality (Gehrke, 2005). “Urban schools often face such challenges as high student poverty and mobility rates, and unsafe neighborhoods” (Osher & Fleischman, 2005, p. 84). However, in the face of these challenges, researchers have identified social and emotional learning as a method to support positive learning and behavior in urban environments (Osher & Fleischman, 2005).

During the interview, all five participants were asked if it would be challenging to use social and emotional learning to transform culture and academic success in an urban environment; and all five participants answered positively. Ms. Brown stated, “I think it’s more difficult because the kids in an urban environment comes [sic] in lacking a lot of empathy and the ability to work with one another. They are not used to getting along in situations that require them to think and work together as partners and groups” (April 28, 2017, lines 33-35). Ms. Fox expressed that it would be more challenging in an urban environment because:

You don’t have the parental support, and a lot of children are not well behaved; they’re self-managing, and they don’t have an adult at home to help manage those behaviors. Unlike children in other environments who have been exposed to social interactions way before they come to

Perceptions in a Changing World

school – I mean those kids have play dates at very early ages – our kids, or most of our kids’ first interactions with other kids their age is when they come to school. Yes, they go to daycares, but the daycare facilities aren’t really teaching them anything. They are really just holding the children until they are picked up. (May 9, 2017, lines 31-37)

Ms. Stephens also spoke on the notion that having a lack of parental support makes it more challenging to use SEL to transform culture and academic success in an urban environment. She asserted that, “we don’t have parental involvement, and information that is learned in school is not transferred at home. Therefore when they come back to school, it’s like starting all over again with anything that we’ve taught them prior to” (May 9, 2017, lines 28-30). When asked to elaborate, she maintained:

It’s like we are our students’ first teacher – like we are the parents almost. But we can’t just focus on the things that the parents can focus on because we also have a curriculum to teach. So while we are trying to teach the curriculum, we also have to teach them how to be respectful, how to talk to each other; just how to be regular people, and it’s a lot. (May 9, 2017, lines 32-35)

With this regard, Mr. Walker also declared that “most of our kids come unprepared, and what you think they should know, they don’t know; like for instance, rules and regulations that you would think that they would know like covering their mouth when they sneeze or just be polite; some of them don’t even know how to do that” (May 17, 2017, lines 30-32).

Researchers have found that “now, more than ever, students in inner-cities across America are in critical need of social and emotional learning skills” (Wells, Fox, & Cordova-Coba, 2016, para. 26). However, they do not attest to the challenges that teachers face when implementing SEL in these types of environments. One can find a growing body of evidence indicating the number of schools transformed through the use of SEL; but do these transformations differ from school to school. The participants in this study have beliefs that are aligned with today’s research, however, their experiences

Perceptions in a Changing World

with SEL include a number of challenges that are not often taken into account when reporting the results of SEL.

When the participants were asked if social and emotional learning could help make the challenges that they incur easier, three of the five participants answered positively, while the other two answered possibly, or maybe. Ms. Fox stated, “It may, in some instances, make the challenges a little easier, but the majority of the challenges will not change” (May 9, 2017, lines 43-44). When asked to elaborate, she expressed that, “many of the challenges that our students face are not addressed with SEL. Yes, I know that it helps to deal with the social and emotional aspects of learning, but our students’ areas of deficit are different from those of other students. Like, our students deal with real life, adult-type of problems, like no food and no lights. SEL can’t feed them at night or turn they [sic] lights on. So when they come to school after dealing with that, it’s hard to reach them” (May 9, 2017, lines 46-50). In contrast, Ms. Brown commented, “Yes, I think SEL will help to make those challenges easier. I think that SEL can help to equip our students with the tools that they are lacking, so that they can grow up to become productive citizens” (April 28, 2017, lines 38-40).

Although each participant declared that working in urban environments is more challenging than working in other environments, two of the participants stated that they wished to work in an urban environment until retirement. Dr. Jones stated:

I’ve been teaching for 25 years. All of those years have been in an urban environment. I just think that I’m more needed in environments where I can help to motivate the students. I think that I’m able to give more in urban environments because the students need more. (April 27, 2017, lines 45-47)

Likewise, Ms. Fox commented:

Probably so, because I’m nearing the end of my career, and I’ve always worked in this type of

Perceptions in a Changing World

setting, so I believe that I will continue working in this type of environment until the end of my career. Plus, I think that working in this type of environment is more rewarding. (May 9, 2017, lines 53-55)

On the contrary, three of the five participants believe that they need the experience of working in other school environments. Ms. Brown commented:

I've worked in the urban environment for 17 years, and it is wear and tear on your body; it's wear and tear on your mind. It has its pros and its cons. You know, you can see the growth within the kids when working with them, and with them being in the classroom and building community from the beginning of the year to the end of the year, but at the same time, it can be challenging year after year going through some of the same things that we face on the day-to-day basis. (April 28, 2017, lines 44-49)

With this same regard, Ms. Stephens also stated:

No, I don't see myself working in this type of environment. I've pretty much, since I've taught, I've been teaching in this type of environment, but I am looking forward to trying to experience other areas of education other than the urban setting. To be honest, I'm tired of this type of setting. I feel like I have to do too much; too many things other than teach, and it's draining. Now, on top of everything else, we have to teach SEL. It's just too much. (May 9, 2017, lines 43-47)

What would it take to weave social and emotional learning into the daily workings of this urban elementary school without the teachers feeling overwhelmed? Is it possible to embed SEL into the curriculum so that the teachers do not feel as though it is yet another thing to do?

The participants were later asked if they saw any benefits with incorporating SEL in an urban environment, and they all answered positively. Ms. Fox stated:

Perceptions in a Changing World

I definitely see some children who stop and think now before they react. They're thinking about the consequences. They're thinking about the lessons that we talked about. And students actually will remind other students of remembering what we discussed in SEL. So I do see that it is beneficial to some students. (May 9, 2017, lines 79-82)

Ms. Stephens responded:

I see that it is beneficial to all students being that because it's an urban setting, the students are more than likely not getting the exposure to that type of behavior management at home, so when we are able to provide at least a little, it does benefit. (May 9, 2017, lines 67-69)

Mr. Walker replied:

I see total benefits with my students. Like I said, out of 21 of my students, I would say that at least 17 of them are benefiting and learning better self-management because of SEL. The ones that are not benefiting, it's not the program. It's the students, and unfortunately, I hate to say it, but, they wouldn't benefit from anything. They are stuck in their ways – the ways that they have learned at home, and it would take a miracle to change them. (May 17, 2017, lines 64-68)

Overall, the results indicate strong and consistent support for the value of social and emotional learning. According to the collected data, teachers believe that SEL can transform school culture and academic success. The students at LJS Elementary have demonstrated improvement in their academic lives since being involved in social and emotional learning. The SEL program has had positive effects on the students' attitudes toward self, as well as their social behaviors. However, these positive outcomes only occur when the program is implemented appropriately, and with fidelity. The program must also be implemented consistently if positive outcomes are to be obtained, and that does not always occur in this type of environment.

Several studies have findings that affirm the benefits of social and emotional learning. Yet, not

Perceptions in a Changing World

many of them account for students in urban environments. Although the teachers believe that SEL can transform school culture and academic success, data from the study suggest that their experiences with that transformation has been difficult because of the school's environment. The participants in this study report that the students in urban environments struggle with the appropriate development of the five social competencies related to social and emotional learning. They agree that students in this environment are regularly engulfed in stressful situations that deter them from learning the social emotional competencies, which equip them with the tools they need to “seek help when needed, manage their own emotions, and problem solve difficult situations” (Romasz, Kantor, & Elias, 2004, as cited in Yoder, 2014, p. 2).

The participants also report the lack of parental engagement as an issue that makes the implementation of SEL more challenging in urban environments. In order for social and emotional learning to be effective, it is not enough “to simply provide the students themselves with strategies for dealing with the difficult and complex issues they face every day” (Furger, 2001, para. 1). The students must also be supported at home by their parents. While both teachers and parents have essential roles to play in promoting the development of students' behavioral and academic performance, the teachers cannot do it alone; which is often the expectation in urban environments as revealed by this study.

The participants further reported that social and emotional learning does not address many of the challenges that students in urban environments are faced with. “Situations outside of school – often related to poverty, crime, or community conflicts – can make it difficult for students to focus in the classroom” (Blad, 2015, para. 21). Teachers cannot control what happens outside of school, yet the outside occurrences often are brought inside by the students. However, the goal of social and emotional learning is to teach students how to better cope with those outside occurrences, which is what Ms. Brown, as well as the other participants attempt to do.

Perceptions in a Changing World

Each participant believes that there are benefits with incorporating social and emotional learning in elementary schools – even in urban environments. The participants reported that they see changes in their students’ actions because of what they are learning in SEL. Students are thinking before they react, and considering the consequences before they take action. Students are also using the SEL strategies when dealing with situations at school, as well as reminding their peers to use the SEL strategies when they are in need. Even with the exposure to SEL only occurring at school, the students are making improvements. However, it has not been beneficial to all students. There are some students who have made no improvements, and the participants do not believe that they will. These students do not make up the majority, however, they are important when determining if an initiative is effective in specific environments. Previous studies on the impact of SEL show gains in “all students who participated in well-implemented SEL programs versus students who did not” (Clayton, 2017, para. 7). The term “well-implemented” should be closely scrutinized to determine what variables are inclusive in its meaning; and if those variables are included in the implementation of SEL at the site in which this study took place.

The participants’ responses indicate strong consistent support for the value of social and emotional learning; and they do notice a relationship between SEL and academic achievement. In order for students to demonstrate improvement in their academics, however, SEL must be properly implemented. Their perceptions of SEL are affirmative, and directly aligns with much of the research. Based on their interactions with the program, SEL may positively impact the students at LJS Elementary School.

Is there an Effective Approach that can be used to Manage Organizational Change during the Adoption of SEL?

One of the most challenging aspects of education currently is the understanding and management

Perceptions in a Changing World

of change (Fullan, 2002). Faced with the struggle of low test scores and an increase in behavior concerns, this school was led to implement social and emotional learning as a strategy that could assist with academic and behavioral improvements. The issue of how the teachers would cope with the change was never considered. In order to determine if the participants believed that the best approach was used to implement SEL, I posed questions about change. During the interview, the participants were first asked about their experience with educational reforms. All five participants had some experience with implementing educational reforms at a previous school, or at the current school. When asked how they felt about educational reforms, only one participant seemed to think positively about them. Mr. Walker stated:

I feel good about them. I mean, I think I liked SFA and I also like America's Choice as well; and I think it fits pretty well in the urban environment. It allows you to hone in on those specific skills that are really lacking. (May 17, 2017, lines 113-115)

Ms. Brown somewhat agreed with Mr. Walker, however, she is not positively certain that educational reforms are what students in urban environments need. She explained:

I think a lot of educational reforms are, some of them can help, and some of them are just programs and designs to basically – it's a producer and consumer type of situation. When they're basically just looking for things to sell off to schools to make money off of. Some programs can work, but out of the ones that I have experienced, I haven't had much success with a lot of reform programs. (April 28, 2017, lines 129-133)

Both Ms. Fox and Ms. Stephens spoke to the length of time given with regards to the implementation educational reforms. They do not believe that school districts invest enough time collecting data to determine if a program has been successful before adopting a different program. Ms. Fox commented:

I feel that some educational reforms are not thought out, and they're not well planned or

Perceptions in a Changing World

implemented; and therefore, you don't have the opportunity to see if they're really valid or if they really work because before you can get all of your evidence in and try it with fidelity, they've moved on to something else. (May 9, 2017, lines 146-149)

Similarly, Ms. Stephens commented, "with reforms, I just don't like the word reform; but they don't give enough time for implementation to actually see if it works before they're moving on to the next" (May 9, 2017, lines 114-115). Dr. Jones spoke very negatively about educational reforms. She stated:

To be honest, I hate educational reforms. I just really think that they set the children up for failure. To be honest, I don't typically buy-in to things telling me that I can't teach, or giving strategies that children can't use in the long run outside of the reform. (April 27, 2017, lines 120-122)

Each participant was then asked if they believed that SEL was a reform, and they all answered negatively. They do not feel that SEL is a reform because it is not telling the teacher how to teach the curriculum explicitly. However, Second Step, the program selected by the district to teach SEL, is very explicit in its directions. When questioned about this, each participant explained that they do not view SEL as a part of the traditional or regular curricula. They have been taught how to teach English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies in their regular college programs, and therefore are equipped to do so without an educational reform. Nevertheless, SEL is something new. It is something that they have never taught before, so their feelings toward the program are different than their feelings toward other educational reforms.

The participants were then asked about their feelings regarding change in their personal lives. Ms. Stephens is the only participant who had no ill feelings toward an abrupt change in her personal life. She answered, "I have no problem with actual change. I'm very flexible to change. If I had to move, or change abruptly, I would adapt pretty easily" (May 9, 2017, lines 118-119). The other participants felt

Perceptions in a Changing World

stress or hesitancy when dealing with change in their personal lives. Ms. Fox commented:

I typically don't like change. I'm a creature of habit so I would be very disturbed if I had to move all of a sudden, or if anything in my life is out of the norm, it really kind of, throws me off.

(May 9, 201, lines 152-153)

The next question asked the participants how they would feel about implementing changes at work, and surprisingly, four out of five participants explained that they would have no problem implementing changes in the workplace. Because of the way that she responded to the previous question, I expected Ms. Stephens to have an affirmative response to the current question; and she did. However, she did mention training, or professional learning as an assisting factor when implementing changes in the workplace. She stated, "I don't have a problem with changes at work, as long as prior to, training has been provided to help me with that change" (May 9, 2017, lines 121-122). Mr. Walker and Dr. Jones both commented that change at work is expected and inevitable. They both believe that change in the workplace is good; especially if it is beneficial for the students. Contrarily, Ms. Fox stated:

If the changes that are made can be, if I see evidence that the changes will work, then I have no problem with making changes at work. It's just when I see that it hasn't been well planned and well thought out, and I feel that there's not going to be a positive impact, those are the changes that I typically am reluctant to make. (May 9, 2017, lines 155-158)

Ms. Brown, who would be stressed if implementing a change in her personal life, stated:

Change for me, it's hard at times, because you get accustomed to doing things a certain way.

But, once you set your mind to something and you analyze the situation and realize that it would be better for everyone that's involved, and then it would be a lot, you know, smoother for me to agree on change. But change in any situation is difficult at first. (April 28, 2017, lines 138-141)

Organizational change is complicated (Fullan, 2002), and it involves a variety of unavoidable

Perceptions in a Changing World

challenges. However, is it more challenging to implement change in different environments? The participants were asked if the current school environment played a role in their feelings regarding change in the workplace, and they all answered positively. Ms. Fox answered, “Yes, it does. I feel as though this school environment is one of strong critique, and it plays a part in my ability to be able to change” (May 9, 2017, lines 160-161). Ms. Stephens responded:

I think the environment does have a great effect on change. Throughout the building, you want the climate to be a positive one, in that if you’re making a change everybody’s on board rather than being reluctant to want to change. (May 9, 2017, lines 124-126)

All five of the participants in this study had some experience with implementing educational reforms, yet, only one participant felt positively about them. However, the participants did not believe that social and emotional learning was a reform. Many of the participants did report that they had apprehensions regarding change. “The teachers’ attitudes toward change and their readiness to become active partners is considered a critical success factor” when implementing a change (Avidov-Ungar & Eshet-Alkakay, 2011, p. 292). “Similarly, resistance to change is considered one of the main reasons for failure of processes that involve change in organizations in general and in the educational systems in particular” (Avidov-Ungar & Eshet-Alkakay, 2011, p. 292). Although they were not in favor of change in general, their feelings toward implementing changes at work were different. If the purpose of the changes were to improve the outcomes of the students, they were in favor of the changes, although they are aware that change can be difficult.

Organizational change is even more difficult to implement in certain school environments.

Unlike suburban and rural schools, urban schools “operate in densely populated areas serving significantly more students” (Ahram, Stembridge, Fergus, & Noguera, 2011, para. 3). Urban schools are also “frequently marked by higher concentrations of immigrant populations and linguistic diversity, and

Perceptions in a Changing World

more frequent rates of student mobility” (Ahram, Stembridge, Fergus, & Noguera, 2011, para. 3). The challenges that urban schools are already faced with makes implementing change a daunting task.

However, it is important to note that not all urban environments are confronted with the same challenges. As reported by one of my participants who has worked in urban environments for over twenty years, “this school environment is one of strong critique, and it plays a part in my ability to be able to change” (May 9, 2017, lines 160-161). She, as well as other participants, did not speak on the typical challenges that all urban environments face, yet a focus was placed on the specific challenges involving LJS Elementary School – which speaks to the culture of the school environment.

Is there an Effective Method that can be used to Prepare Teachers to Teach Social and Emotional Learning?

Many of the participants have mentioned something about training or professional learning in social and emotional learning without being prompted. However, questions regarding teacher training were included in the interview to determine if the teachers had been trained, and if they believed that the training was adequate. To begin, the participants were asked if they have been prepared to teach SEL. Ms. Fox responded, “I’ve received some training, but I think more training is needed. It hasn’t been extensive. It’s been surface. This is how you implement the program, but not in depth training” (May 9, 2017, lines 57-58). Dr. Jones stated:

Yes, they did do some types of workshops but I do believe that there needs to be a more in depth training. Their training was at like a beginner level, but now that we have begun, where do we go from here. (April 27, 2017, lines 49-51)

Ms. Brown and Ms. Stephens answered similarly to Ms. Fox and Dr. Jones. They both answered yes, they have been trained, but believe that more extensive training needs to follow the initial training. Mr. Walker, on the other hand, answered, “No, not at all” (May 17, 2017, line 43), when asked had he been

Perceptions in a Changing World

prepared to teach social and emotional learning. He further explained:

I guess they call those meetings that we had training, but they were not. I mean, I learned a lot about SEL itself and how it applies to my life, and why it is important, but I was not trained on how to teach to my students or how to fit it in my schedule. No, no, not at all. (May 17, 2017, lines 43-45)

The participants were then asked if they valued the SEL training that they have received, although they all agree that more training is needed. Ms. Stephens responded:

Yes and no. Basically, the training that I received focus more towards what and how the teacher would handle the situation as it applies to teacher-student relationships, more so than what we can do with the kids when they're in or dealing with those situations. (May 9, 2017, lines 51-53)

Similarly, Ms. Fox also answered, "Yes and no" (May 9, 2017, line 60). She further explained, "Some of the SEL training that I have received has focused more on my personal development, as opposed to how to see growth, or get growth out of the children" (lines 60-61).

To acquire more information on training or professional learning in social and emotional learning, I asked the participants if the training that they have been involved in is aligned with the outcomes that they would like for their students to achieve. Ms. Brown, Dr. Jones, Mr. Walker, and Ms. Stephens all answered that the training is somewhat aligned with the outcomes that they would like for their students to achieve. Dr. Jones commented, "Not all of the outcomes, but some of them have been covered in the training. Hopefully, if we get more training, other outcomes will be included in the training" (April 27, 2017, lines 56-57). Ms. Stephens stated, "I think that the training is aligned to the students behavior, however, when the behaviors become extensive or more intense in the classroom, we don't have that training, in regard to how to deal with things like hands-on occurrences" (May 9, 2017, lines 56-58). Comparably, Ms. Fox answered, "No, I don't think it's aligned, because behaviors that I

Perceptions in a Changing World

see in class are much more serious than the issues that have been addressed during my SEL training” (May 9, 2017, lines 64-65).

Based on the participants’ responses, they have received training in SEL, but are not convinced that SEL addresses the concerns of every student. “As such, the question inadvertently positions the student as the problem. It highlights the incomplete narrative that children of color”, or children in urban environments, “are in need of some intervention to save them from themselves” (Simmons, 2017, para. 3). There may be a need for more extensive training focused on the issues addressed by the informants. The teachers are the ones who have to lay the groundwork for a successful SEL implementation. However, will expanding the training “expand the definition and practices of social and emotional learning to ensure that we serve all students more effectively and equitably” (Simmons, 2017, para. 4). Or do we need to take a deeper look at the SEL program through lenses of equity?

As the interview continued, the participants were questioned about the supports that are in place to ensure the effectiveness of the SEL program. Ms. Brown is the only participant who considered the Second Step Program as a system of support. She stated:

Well, we have Second Step which also teaches the kids how to get along with one another; how to act when dealing with different situations that may occur throughout the day whether it’s at school or whether it’s at home; just working with each other teaching them the right words to say, teaching them the right strategies to use when they’re faced with challenges that may impede how they think or how they act when working with one another at school or whether it’s at home. (April 28, 2017, lines 58-62)

Dr. Jones and Mr. Walker discussed the support personnel as they addressed the question. Dr. Jones expressed:

Well, we have coaches, and we have a counselor that comes by and checks. And then you have

Perceptions in a Changing World

your teachers that you work with, your colleagues, and you talk to them about it, so, you have different people in place to talk about different things that are going on with social and emotional learning. (April 27, 2017, lines 59-62)

Mr. Walker, however, only mentioned the SEL coaches. Ms. Fox and Ms. Stephens had similar answers to the posed question. Ms. Fox stated:

We do have people who come and observe to make sure that we are implementing the SEL program. But there's really no checks and balances as far as the strategies, other than just the observations by other members of the school. (May 9, 2017, lines 67-69)

Comparably, Ms. Stephens expressed, "There are, to me, not any supports in regard to the effectiveness; not as much that is needed. But, like the prior answer, there are people that comes in from time to time to check on us" (May 9, 2017, lines 60-61).

In order for social and emotional learning to reach its maximum potential, it must be properly implemented. This requires that the facilitator, or teacher, possess a certain set of knowledge and skills to understand how to execute the program appropriately, and ensure that it supports the students, and is embedded into the regular curricula (Buchanan, Gueldner, Tran, & Merrell, 2009). Initial and introductory training alone is not enough (Buchanan, Gueldner, Tran, & Merrell, 2009). There should be levels of training and support given to build teacher confidence and guarantee the fulfillment of the program. According to the participants, it does not seem as if that level of training or support has been provided.

Considering that there is not much support given with the implementation of SEL, one would think that there are many challenges. To confirm this, the participants were asked about any challenges that they face solely with the implementation of SEL. Three of the participants referenced time as a challenge. Ms. Brown commented:

Perceptions in a Changing World

Well, the time. We have 30 minutes a day to teach a warm up activity or whatever skill that we're introducing for that day, so a lot of times we do run out of time when we're trying to make sure that it's effective. (April 28, 2017, lines 64-66)

Similarly, Ms. Fox also discussed time as an issue. However, her issue with time not only included the 30 minutes that they are given to teach SEL, but also the time it takes to teach the standards for the other curricula while trying to incorporate SEL. She stated:

SEL, it takes a lot of time to actually do it with fidelity, and I would really like to spend more time working with the kids, and, you know, showing them how to use the strategies and complimenting them when they do use the strategies throughout the day. But with the time constraints that we have to get the standards taught, there's not enough time to actually implement it in my opinion. (May 9, 2017, lines 73-77)

When Ms. Stephens mentioned time, she included her concerns about the time of day that SEL is implemented, and how many students miss the lesson because of issues with attendance. She responded:

Because of the time constraints, it's only what, 30 minutes, we're actually able to implement it as well, especially because it's given in the morning time and we're still waiting on students to come in; students who are absent or mainly tardy. (May 9, 2017, lines 63-65)

Dr. Jones and Mr. Walker have experienced different challenges with the implementation of SEL. Dr. Jones revealed:

Well, I think that people who implement, or who started social and emotional learning really thought that it would work for all children, and it does not work for all children. It just depends on the child itself. Some children, with fewer issues, they will do fine with SEL, but there are some children who need something more than SEL, and it's hard when we have to try to keep everyone inside of a bubble that they do not fit in. (April 27, 2017, lines 64-68)

Perceptions in a Changing World

Mr. Walker shared a similar concern. He stated:

It just doesn't work with all of the kids. Like I said earlier, I have about four kids that SEL is just not working for. It just doesn't get to them. I'm trying to help them, but, I won't say that they're so far gone, but they're just, I don't know, the streets may have them I would say, and unfortunately, SEL doesn't work in the streets. (May 17, 2017, lines 62-65)

Although each participant identified a challenge with the implementation of SEL, when asked how they would rate their current implementation of SEL, they all rated themselves at a three when using a scale of one to five, with one being low and five being high. Ms. Brown even felt that she may be heading to a four. She expressed:

I would say a three, or a three and a half. It's still a work in progress. We're leaning more towards a four than a three. I can see a change in my students' behavior from the first week of school till now. Some kids who had difficulty getting along with other kids in the past, or some kids who were not accustomed to using breathing techniques and strategies, or thinking positively, or working with anyone else in a positive manner, and within the groups, or independently, I can see a change in their behavior. When using the strategies that have been implemented, I can see that they take time when they have a friend or one of their peers is having difficulty implementing the strategies, they remind them of the strategies that they can use to help them overcome situations that may occur. (April 28, 2017, lines 71-79)

Although Ms. Fox acknowledges that she does not implement SEL daily, she still rated herself similarly to Ms. Brown. She stated:

I probably am like at a three as far as my implementation goes. There are some days when I have to skip it; there's so much going on that I don't get a chance to actually implement that lesson that day. But when we do have SEL, I see that it's more of a community. The kids actually want

Perceptions in a Changing World

to do it every morning when they come in. They don't like when I skip it. So it does form a community. Kids are able to get out those feelings and share and talk about things that they wouldn't normally be able to discuss with an adult. (May 9, 2017, lines 85-90)

Based on their responses, the teachers feel somewhat confident with their ability to implement SEL, and they are seeing positive behavioral changes from the students. This could be because of the lack of checks and balances that are in place, which is causing the participants to follow the Second Step curriculum as best as they know how. It could also be due to the positive changes that they are seeing in their students' behavior. Perhaps receiving additional support and training could boost the participants' level of confidence up to a five, and in turn increase the effectiveness of the program.

The participants reported that they have received very little training on how to properly implement social and emotional learning. They participated in learning sessions where they have acquired knowledge about what social and emotional learning is, and how it applies to their life as adults, yet they did not learn how to pass it on to the students in order to help them grow as productive beings. They were, however, grateful for the information that they have received regarding SEL, although it has not been very beneficial with assisting the students.

“According to a recent Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) report, a whopping 83% of teachers stated that they want training in social and emotional learning skills”, yet very few teachers actually receive that training (Schonert-Reichl & Zakrzewski, 2014, para. 1). This is aligned with what my participants reported. The lack of SEL training for teachers, however, has direct consequences for students (Schonert-Reichl & Zakrzewski, 2014). As daily pressures are beginning to increase in students' lives, stress levels are also increasing (McSheehy, 2017). “Developing students' social and emotional intelligence will help them to learn skills to effectively deal with stress” (McSheehy, 2017, para. 2). Teachers must be empowered and prepared in learning how to develop their

Perceptions in a Changing World

students' SEL skills in order for it to be effective (McSheehy, 2017).

Although admitting that more extensive SEL training is needed, the participants continued to question whether or not SEL will work for all of their students. The teachers believe that they “need teaching and curricula that are responsive to their life experiences” (Simmons, 2017, para. 3). This belief “further reveals the teachers’ implicit biases – the unconscious stereotypes about groups of people that drive behavior and decision making – and the need to create and teach social and emotional learning programs within a culturally relevant context” (Simmons, 2017, para. 3). However, training would still be necessary even if the program is changed. With the lack of training, the participants reported a number of challenges that they face while implementing SEL with very little support. The issue of time was a constant factor as the participants discussed challenges – yet it was viewed differently from person to person. A few participants discussed not having enough time to implement the program daily because they are only given thirty minutes per day. While others discussed the effect of student tardiness on acquiring the SEL skills. “Several studies have shown that school tardiness has a negative impact on learning outcomes” (Vukovic, 2017, para. 1). When SEL instruction only occurs in the morning and many of the students are late, they are not receiving the SEL instruction. Perhaps this is the reason why SEL is not working for all of the students at LJS Elementary.

After reporting that they face challenges with social and emotional learning and receive very little support, the participants felt somewhat confident in their ability to implement SEL. This data came in as a shock, considering previous data gathered showing the lack of training that teachers have received. Studies show that teachers “recognize professional development as the common thread that motivates them, improves their sense of efficacy, assists them in successful curriculum implementation, heightens their awareness of the need to improve teaching practices and the need to become student centered and improve student learning” (Bennett, 2007, p. ii). However, these teachers know and report

Perceptions in a Changing World

a problem of poor professional development or training regarding SEL, yet they manage to have a strong sense of efficacy. The issue could lie in the idea of support, which the participants also ranked as poor. If there are no checks and balances in place to ensure that the program is being implemented appropriately, the teachers are continuing to implement the program without knowing if they are doing it correctly or incorrectly. Therefore, they have a sense of confidence in their ability to implement SEL because they are not aware of a different, or better way to implement it. In other words, “they don’t know what they don’t know” (“The Four”, 2016, para. 1).

A Day in the Life of the Participants

Researcher Irvin Seidman (2013) “estimated that during the time we are awake and actually engaged in our lives, we see and hear things at about a rate of one per second. So in an 8-hour day, we are involved in perhaps 30,000 events” (p. 22). The purpose of the second part of the interview was “to concentrate on the concrete details of the participants’ present lived experience” prior to beginning their SEL lesson and after (Seidman, 2013, p. 21). I did not ask for opinions, “but rather the details of their experience, upon which their opinions” and actions “may be built” (Seidman, 2013, p. 21). The participants were asked to reconstruct a day in their lives as a teacher from the time that they awaken until they fall asleep. Each participant was given approximately thirty minutes to complete the handwritten task, but could use any amount of time needed. Ms. Brown, who completed the task in 57 minutes, wrote:

Awakened by the alarm clock at 5:45 am and hit the floor at 6:00 am. I shower and get dressed just in time to pray and grab a quick breakfast (a piece of fruit, breakfast bar, and juice). I pack a lunch because I dare to eat from the school cafeteria. Grab my computer bag and head for the door to realize I left my cell phone upstairs. Quickly, I run up the stairs to retrieve my phone and head out the door. On the drive to work, I listen to today’s gospel to get a bit of encouragement.

Perceptions in a Changing World

As I get on the interstate, I can see up ahead that traffic is bumper to bumper. The traffic has caused me to be 8 minutes off schedule. As I pull into the school parking lot, I hear the school bell ringing signifying that it's 7:30. I jump out of the car barely putting it in park and run across the parking lot to sign in before being late. As I Kronos in and press enter, it's 7:31, which means that I now have to sign the late book for being 1 minute late. As I turn around, I see one of my students waiting in the office because he has gotten in trouble on the bus. I proceed down the hall to the classroom and hear two students screaming in the restroom. One of the students has fallen because they both were playing. Finally, I make it to the classroom and am met by a parent who wants to explain why her child did not have items for the class party. Now, here comes the kids into the room. I had no time to make copies for our morning lesson, so now I have to move to plan B. Wait, what is plan B? We listen to the morning announcements and afterwards gather around the carpet for our morning SEL lesson. I have students to share how they're feeling and explain the feelings that they have. We chart our feelings for a later activity. A few minutes into SEL, the principal comes down to inform the grade-level that we did not take attendance yesterday, and we should take attendance every day, no exceptions. I'm sure a lot of teachers forgot because of the 8:15 fire drill that we had the day before. We move on and head into the hall to take a restroom break and boy's restroom is still without soap (3rd day now). I have to find soap in my cabinet because the custodian is nowhere to be found. After the restroom break, the assistant principal comes to ask us to issue the students their points for the incentive room, and lets us know that she'll be back for them in a few minutes. However, the teachers are trying to complete class lists, an alphabetical roster for the front office, and monitor the students all at once. At 10:00 I line my students for specials only for one of them to remind me that specials are canceled. After completing the class list, the students and I role play the story "The Three Little

Perceptions in a Changing World

Pigs”. After the skit, we make it to the cafeteria for lunch to stand in line because the cafeteria staff is not quite prepared to serve. Most of our lunch time is spent standing and waiting, so I take the students back to the classroom with their trays so that they will not have to rush and eat. After lunch, we take a restroom break, and again, NO SOAP in the boy’s restroom. I call the front office to ask if they can have the custodian to replenish the soap, and was told that they are all on lunch break. After the restroom break, we begin working in math centers. The students start getting very fidgety because we have had a day with no specials and no recess because it’s raining. I put on Kidz Bop music so they can get up and move around to get the wiggles out. We continue our day with working in centers and two students are not following the rules so they had to spend time in the “thinking seat”. At 2:20 we started to pack up for dismissal. The students stack the chairs on the desks and a chair fell off and hit one of kids on the head. I had to rush to the cafeteria to get some ice because the nurse leaves at 2:00. I called her mom but the phone is not in service. I’m now trying to write a note and they’re calling bus riders who must be escorted by me to the bus. I’m now having to walk and write to explain the injury to the mom. After all of the students are gone, I come back to my room to clean up and pack up my things to go home. On the way home, I have to stop by the grocery store to buy food for dinner, come home, cook, clean the kitchen, shower, iron clothes for the next day, grade papers while trying to watch TV, and go to bed. Only to wake up and do it all over again. (April 28, 2017)

Ms. Brown’s day is complete with performing perfunctory tasks for which she seems to do automatically. Her only interpersonal conversations are work related throughout her entire day. Her only reflections of herself are of how she falls short, or makes sacrifices for others. All day she is standing in the gaps for those who are not present – custodians, the school nurse, the cafeteria staff, and even the parent who does not have a working phone. Similarly to Ms. Brown, Ms. Fox wrote:

Perceptions in a Changing World

My day begins at 4 am when I awake to get ready for my daily commute to work. I take a shower, brush my teeth, curl my hair and get dressed in preparation for another day at work. During my shower, I repeat my daily affirmations and reflect upon my daily goals. I wake up my husband at 4:20 so that he can get ready also. By 5, we are ready to leave. I drive the hour plus into the city to my mother-in-laws house where I drop off my husband and continue on to work. As soon as I enter the building, I am on the job; correcting behaviors, re-directing students, saying good morning, and giving much needed hugs and attention. I unpack, eat a quick bite for breakfast, and get ready to receive students at 7:45. I greet each student as he or she enters the classroom. We begin the day with SEL and daily announcements. Student's share how they are feeling, and we discuss how to handle problems and conflict. From 8:30-9:45, I model and supply reading and writing activities. After that, I lead the class in Social Studies instruction and science experiments. I then escort students to specials such as music, art, or P.E. During this time, I am usually engaged in professional learning, trainings, or planning meetings. From 12:15 to 12:45, I grab a quick lunch usually while working on my long "to do" list. After lunch, I deliver math instruction to my students. I usually feel very frustrated because most of my students are below grade level and struggle with math content. At 2:15, I begin signing agendas, assigning homework, and stacking chairs before dismissal. After school, I spend the next two hours working on various tasks including writing lesson plans, grading papers, making copies, etc. Then it's on the road again on my long commute home. I usually nap as my husband drives. Once we arrive at home, I eat dinner, and try to spend some time with my family. Most nights, I spend at least an hour working on school work. Finally, I turn in early to prepare for another long day. (May 9, 2017)

Each of the participants' responses were similar to Ms. Brown's and Ms. Fox's; busy and interminable

Perceptions in a Changing World

all day long. Each of their days were filled with moments of chaos, confusions, and calamity – all while being responsible for 20+ students. Each participant gave very detailed descriptions about their day at work, while ending the day with a list of things to do in order to prepare for the next day. Ms. Stephens' day was comparable to Ms. Browns' and Ms. Fox's, as well as the other participants. However, she wished to construct a perfect day, which she noted does not ever happen in reality. After reconstructing her real day, she was provided with additional paper. She wrote:

I wake up to the sound of a calming alarm, feeling well rested from the night before. My clothes are already pressed and laid out for the week, so I have options about what I want to wear. A good healthy breakfast with coffee is served daily to provide the necessary energy that I need to get through the day. I have time to sit, and enjoy my breakfast as I read the morning paper, or watch the news. When I finish breakfast, I get dressed and prepare to leave. I enter the interstate with no traffic, so I am not worried about time or stressed about being late to work. Upon arrival to work, I take advantage of a fifteen minute grace period before clocking in. My work day would start with warm greetings from my peers and other students. Upon entering my classroom, I am not pressed because everything is already set up for lessons to teach by my assistant or paraprofessional, and my students are entering ready to learn. Throughout the day, I would take advantage of a disturbance free, risk taking, and positive learning environment. I would have time to talk to my students about their issues or concerns during SEL, and possibly work to solve those problems before the day is over. I would also have time to analyze the results of my students' learning, which I love to do; which would also allow me to create formative assessments based on their scores and create flexible learning groups for the next day. Specials would start and end on time, as well as lunch. And I would have a printer, phone, and restroom in the classroom to minimize time wasted transitioning. At the end of the day, the students would

Perceptions in a Changing World

be dismissed by the assistant or paraprofessional, so that I can remain in the classroom and begin to prepare for the next day. During this time, I would also reflect on what went well, and what did not go well, so that I can make any changes to the lesson(s) before tomorrow. I would also use this time to answer emails, and make phone calls to parents. There would be no useless meetings at the end of the day, and I would drive home with no traffic. Upon arriving home, my dinner would be already cooked and prepared along with a nice warm bubble bath to indulge in before spending quality time with my children, and lying down for a good night's rest. (May 9, 2017)

All five of the participants described their days as hectic and high-pressured with feelings of being overloaded and unavailable. No one mentioned much time spent with family or even themselves. They all seemed to be moving throughout the day without being present. "It is easy for teachers to spend so much time and energy focused on their places of work that they forget to consider their own performance", and based on the data, this is what has been occurring with the participants in this study (Anderson, 2014, para. 1). This type of lifestyle leads teachers down the path to burnout, and is most likely caused by teachers' lack of social and emotional skills (Zakrzewski, 2013).

"Developing social and emotional skills – particularly at the adult level – is a complex process (Zakrzewski, 2013, para. 4), yet the skills are imperative not only for the personal well-being of the teachers, but also to improve student learning (Zakrzewski, 2013). Teachers who possess the five social and emotional competencies, "can recognize and manage their own emotions, as well as understand how their emotional responses impact others" (Zakrzewski, 2013, para. 11). This transfers to the SEL lesson and allows the teachers to be just as intentional with SEL, as they are with any other subject (Joseph, Strain, Yates, & Hemmeter, 2010).

When looking at the narrative provided by Ms. Stephens during her construction of a perfect day,

Perceptions in a Changing World

it is apparent that she unintentionally included emotional processes. She consistently spoke of a calming yet positive learning environment where students feel comfortable with taking risks. She also mentioned her hopes of her environment being free of unwanted disturbances. In her response, she inadvertently wished for the development of social/interpersonal skills, which includes tone of voice and interacting positively with her students; as well as cognitive regulation, which includes “inhibiting impulses that are not appropriate to the situation” (Jones, Bouffard, & Weissbourd, 2013, p. 63) Teachers serve as models for their students – intentionally or not, and social and emotional strategies are no different from reading and math strategies. “Students learn from the way teachers manage frustration, maintain control of themselves and the classroom, stay focused in the face of distractions, and shift tactics when needed” (Jones, Bouffard, & Weissbourd, 2013, p. 63). In a perfect world, all teachers would possess strong SEL competencies, as described by Ms. Stephens. However, we do not live in a perfect world, which means that teachers’ competencies must be built through “coaching and other forms of support” (Jones, Bouffard, & Weissbourd, 2013, p. 62).

“In order to put their experiences within the context of the social setting”, I asked the participants to talk a little about their relationships with their students (Seidman, 2013, p. 22). The participants were asked to tell about an experience as a teacher that made them happy that they chose this profession, as well as a time that saddened them. As an experience that made her happy, Ms. Fox revealed:

Recently, we received scores from the Georgia Milestones, and I had a student who had really, really, really, really, been struggling for years in reading, actually two students, and those students were able to successfully pass the test. And I was really, I was thrilled, because I knew that it was due to, you know, them being hard workers and me just continuing to teach and do what I love to do. (May 9, 2017, lines 134-138)

Like most teachers, Ms. Fox lends herself and her emotions in order to share in the success of her

Perceptions in a Changing World

students. Because she set high expectations for her students and they continued to persevere, she celebrated in their successes, which were inadvertently her successes as well. Once you are invested emotionally with your students, you not only share in their successes, but also in their sorrows. As an experience that saddened her, Ms. Fox stated:

A couple of weeks ago, I saw a student walking to the classroom. And he came in, and his head was kind of hanging down, and he was looking as though he had a rough morning. And I stopped him at the door, and I asked him, I said are you okay, and he said yes. And I asked him, well I told him, I said you look really sad. I said are you happy. And he posed a question what do you mean happy. And it seemed as though he never related happiness with his life. Like that wasn't something that he was used to being, or that he even thought he deserved. So that was very sad, and I had to explain what happiness means in terms of his life. Do you enjoy being with your friends? Do you enjoy being with your family? Do you wake up ready to start your day? Are you safe? Are, you know, are all of your needs being met? He had no idea how happiness applied to his life, and that was so sad to me. (May 9, 2017, lines 122-131)

“Education researchers are only beginning to explore the relationship between happiness and school achievement” (Schiller & Hinton, 2015, para. 9). Overall, results in different studies revealed that students who were happy had higher achievement scores (Schiller & Hinton, 2015). “Although voiced in different ways, time and again students of all ages emphasized that their relationships are fundamental to their happiness” (Schiller & Hinton, 2015, para. 19). Social and emotional learning strives to help students to cultivate and maintain positive interpersonal interactions. This ultimately contributes to the development of healthy relationships.

As an experience that made her happy, Ms. Brown commented:

Yes, when I see my kids working together, and when I can see them implementing the things that

Perceptions in a Changing World

are taught to them in the classroom, and they are using it outside of the classroom; especially when on the playground, when, you know, it's not structure, in a structured environment, and I can see them using the strategies and things that I have actually spilled on or spilled out to them, and they are using them effectively, that makes me feel warm and fuzzy on the inside. (April 28, 2017, lines 118-123)

Ms. Brown's experience with her students was directly aligned with what she has been teaching during social and emotional learning. Because she mentioned this as her moment of happiness as a teacher, it demonstrates her fondness of the program. She was able to witness her students' ability to transfer what they are learning in SEL to real world situations, which is a concern for students in urban environments.

Ms. Brown continued to comment about an experience that saddened her:

Yes. I had a student, just last year, who is faced with all type of obstacles that are in her paths, in her way. She, has a very difficult home life and it rolls over into school on a daily basis. She's having a hard time adjusting to the SEL implementation. She, is basically in a field all on her own. It's hard for her to adapt to rules and procedures that are put in place at school because she doesn't have that same stability at home. She's very aggressive. She is physically violent and verbally abusive. And, with SEL, I just can't really see that really helping a child in that type of environment or setting. (lines 109-115)

Surprisingly, Ms. Brown mentioned SEL in her story about sadness, and how she does not think that SEL would have helped her student who was having a difficult time adapting. This may seem to conflict with her previous experience of happiness. However, this may provide insight that SEL is not a cure all, and the program may have its limitations. Ms. Stephens also discussed SEL. She stated:

Sad...I've had a lot of sad moments, but I'll speak on one. Sad is not being able to help a student that you know they're in a situation that you know is not in their control. One in particular is a

Perceptions in a Changing World

student that I have, they're moving from place to place, and I look at the background information of that student, and that student has been to several schools throughout their elementary school years, and currently still bouncing around from house to house, and not able to bring up grades, and just, scores are not on grade level and that's sad being that I know that the student is trying, but have circumstances that they can't control. And this is where I feel like SEL is not a tool that could help all students. Because all students don't deal with stuff like this. All students don't have these types of issues. But for the ones that do, SEL doesn't tell them how to cope with real life issues. (May 9, 2017, lines 96-102)

Ms. Stephens' thoughts about the limitations of SEL are similar to Ms. Brown's. There is a myriad of issues that afflict students in urban environments, and as much as we would like to find a remedy to solve all of their issues, we may have to accept that other resources need to be utilized in conjunction with SEL. As the teachers have reported, social and emotional learning is useful and should be used as a tool for students in urban environments. However, it may need to accompany other tools that are also available in the educational toolbox.

Observations

At the conclusion of the interviews, I conducted one observation per participant. The purpose of the 30 minute observations were to record the behavior of the participants in the environment of an SEL lesson. During the observations, I used two tools (see Appendix B) to collect additional data. Tool I, the "Selective Scripting Observation Tool" was used during the observations to script and make notes of the events occurring in the classroom. Tool II was used at the conclusion of the observation along with Tool I and the video of the observation in order to equip the researcher with information regarding the implementation of SEL – both effective and ineffective. The video of the observation was further used to stimulate recall in conjunction with the notes and observation tools. As evidenced by the participants'

Perceptions in a Changing World

descriptions, they brought a variety of teaching experiences to the study. The differences were highly evident in the manner that they each implemented SEL.

As described in chapter 3 and the previous paragraph, I used the observation tools to examine and compare how teachers implemented social and emotional learning. To review, the second observation tool enabled me to a) examine the type of relationships established between the teachers and the students, b) explore the type of environment created for SEL lessons, and c) analyze the degree to which the teachers were teaching SEL, and utilizing SEL strategies. Studying the teachers' implementation of SEL provided me with the opportunity to physically observe their attitudes during the lesson, and therefore helps to address the research question driving the overall multiple case study:

- Are teachers' attitudes hindering the success of educational innovations that promote teaching and learning?

Building positive relationships. During the observed lessons, each of the five participants seem to have established relationships with each of the students, however, I cannot speak to the relationship with the students' families. During the SEL lesson, each participant greeted every student by name. Ms. Brown engaged her students in a circle activity where every student introduced him/herself using a descriptive adjective as shown in the following excerpt:

Ms. Brown: Good morning boys and girls. I am bubbling Ms. Brown.

Student 1: Good morning bubbling Ms. Brown. I am talented Tanisha (pseudonym).

Student 2: Good morning talented Tanisha. I am sleepy Samaya (pseudonym).

Once everyone has introduced themselves, the teacher and the other students welcomed that student to class by saying good morning, the child's name, and telling him/her to have a wonderful day.

Although the other participants' greetings were not as extensive as Ms. Brown's, every student was spoken to calmly, with respect, consideration, and warmth. The students with challenging behaviors

Perceptions in a Changing World

were also attended to in positive ways, with a warm tone. Mr. Walker and Dr. Jones had to redirect students during the SEL lesson, and they both used please and thank you when asking the students to change their behavior.

As the SEL lesson continued, many of the participants demonstrated their willingness to build positive relationships by circling the room as their students worked collaboratively. They made themselves available to their students by reassuring them that they were on the right track, as well as offered praise when students met or approached expectations. All of the participants used body language and non-verbal cues to build positive relationships. They often smiled at the students or nodded affirmatively to demonstrate their approval. These non-verbal cues sent the message that the participants were present during the lesson, attending to the students, available, and engaged in the learning process. This behavior was not demonstrated by every participant, as will be presented later in this section.

Although The Second Step Program is scripted, it does not give the teachers instructions on how to build positive relationships throughout the lesson. The teachers' actions were unprompted and more spontaneous in nature, appearing to have happened organically due to previously established rapport with the students. This behavior demonstrates the understanding of the importance of fostering positive interactions within the classroom community.

“Building positive relationships with young children is an essential task and a foundational component of good teaching” (Joseph & Strain, 2004, p. 1). It is also a vital component of social and emotional learning. “When teachers establish positive relationships with children through the early years, children feel safe and secure, laying the foundation for healthy social and emotional development” (Jones, 2015, para. 1). It was clear during the observations that the participants had worked very hard to develop meaningful relationships with their students. However, there were no signs that demonstrated the development of meaningful relationships with their families; which is one critical

Perceptions in a Changing World

piece to supporting social and emotional learning (Jones, 2015). “When you connect with families to discuss children’s development, everyone benefits – especially the children” (Jones, 2015, para. 10).

The participants reported a lack of parental engagement as a challenge to the implementation of SEL. However, have they done all that they can do to involve the parents and make them a part of the SEL process? While researchers discuss the importance of teachers creating regular opportunities to communicate with parents, no evidence of these opportunities were observed during the lesson (Jones, 2015).

Designing supportive environments. Each participant began the SEL lesson in circle time, which is the school’s expectation. Ms. Brown’s and Ms. Fox’s students remained in circle time for the duration of the lesson, while the other three classes had students to transition back to their seats for partner and group collaboration. It did not appear as if the participants had much choice on deciding what to do during the lesson. All of the activities were planned, designed, and included in the Second Step curriculum, unless deviated from.

The schedule for SEL has been created by the principal and SEL Coach, as well as most of the routines. Every SEL lesson begins with Mind Yeti, an activity used to help students “gain a sense of mindfulness” (Mind Yeti, 2017), followed by greetings, and then into the Second Step lesson. The schedule did, additionally, minimize timely transitions and provide balance throughout the thirty minute lesson. A few of the participants seemed to implement the schedule consistently, considering that every student knew what to do throughout the lesson. Ms. Brown’s students were very familiar with the greeting, as were students in the other classes. The students who transitioned from the carpet to their seats were also aware of the transition and did so with ease. The smooth transitions allowed the lesson to flow consistently without cessations. However, there were moments during the lesson where the students did not seem to know what to do next – indicating their unfamiliarity with SEL.

Perceptions in a Changing World

Mr. Walker began his lesson by giving each student a handshake, high five, or hug. The students were able to choose which greeting they preferred, and after the greeting, they were asked to transition to the carpet. Mr. Walker then led a discussion on kindness, and what it means to be kind. Mr. Walker had to read the lesson directly from the teacher's manual. He stumbled over words, and it was apparent that he had not previously prepared for the lesson. The students were presented with a scenario, and had to work in collaborative groups to explain that feelings influence behavior. The students were dismissed from the carpet to their seats to converse about the scenario. The students then waited on Mr. Walker to provide them with the rest of the activity, but he was busy trying to locate materials. He was looking for chart paper, and it seemed as if his pack of paper was empty. As he tried to develop an alternative plan, the students became disengaged and began to converse about other things – unrelated to kindness or SEL. Mr. Walker then provided each group with a sheet of notebook paper, and told the students to come up with a different way that the student in the scenario could have behaved to display kindness. As the students worked, Mr. Walker proceeded to sit behind his computer. Approximately 17 minutes passed. Mr. Walker instructed the students to clear their desks and proceeded to line them up for a restroom break.

This interesting passage clearly underscores a number of issues regarding the teacher attitude and preparedness for the lesson, thus helping illuminate the way these aspects influence the successfulness of SEL. Mr. Walker's attitude and interest regarding his SEL lesson spilled over and was mirrored by his students. Because he appeared disinterested, his students quickly followed suit. Sitting behind his computer, placed a physical and relational barrier between him and his students. This sent the message that he was not available, again disinterested in social and emotional learning, and unconcerned with his students' progress during the lesson.

Figure 5: Observation Notes – Mr. Walker's Observation

date 5 / 22 / 17

Mr. Walker Classroom Observation

- All students are participating in Mind Yeti - they seem to take the process seriously
- During greeting - most students opted for high five - not hug or handshake - PURPOSE for this??
- Mr. Walker is very unprepared ; stumbling and fumbling over words ; flipping through book - unsure of what is next
- Not prepared at all for the lesson
- Students are pretty well-behaved even though time wasted
- Materials are not prepared - students are unsure of what to do next
- Two students begin arguing over personal issue while teacher looks for supplies
- Teacher did GREAT job of ending argument
* Used very kind + respectful words
- Uses notebook paper to finish lesson b/c can't find chart paper
- Lots of time wasted b/c unprepared
- Students involved in personal discussion - NOT related to SEL lesson
- Difficult to get students back and focused on task
- 17 min - working on task
- Teacher sits behind desk
- Not interested in SEL or what students are saying
- No formal lesson closure
- Lines students up for restroom - put paper in your desk - Doesn't seem to take SEL seriously.

Perceptions in a Changing World

Ms. Stephen's lesson was very similar to Mr. Walker's. She too greeted her students by giving them a handshake, high five, or hug. After the selected greeting, the students transitioned to the carpet. Once every student was seated, Ms. Stephens asked her students if there was anything that they would like to talk about today. One student hesitantly stated that he got into a fight on the school bus this morning, and was now afraid to go home and receive his punishment. Ms. Stephens and the other students asked the student who shared what happened on the bus that led to a fight, and what he could have done differently to prevent the fight from occurring. They then proceeded to give him some different strategies to use at home when dealing with his mom. One student stated that he should start with being honest with his mom, and promise that he will work hard to not fight on the school bus again. A different student suggested that he write his mom a letter explaining what happened, and describing new strategies that he has learned which will help him solve a conflict like this in the future. This discussion was quick, only lasting about ten minutes, yet it was rich and seemed almost therapeutic to the student who shared. Ms. Stephens then gave the students a synopsis about what they would be doing today in SEL. She knew what to say without reading directly from the teacher's manual. The students briefly discussed a time when they were kind with a partner, and two students were able to share their stories with the whole group. Ms. Stephens located her manual to read the scenario, and provided instructions for the students to go back to their collaborative groups at their tables to discuss the scenario and determine a different way that the student in the scenario could have behaved to display kindness.

Figure 6: Scenario Read by Teacher (Second Step Lesson Scenario)

Scenario 5:

Michael is in 4th grade at your school. He constantly pokes and bothers other kids in class, is disrespectful to the teacher, and is a class clown. The students are having a hard time concentrating and want Michael to stop but are afraid of him. Antonio is his best friend and decides to talk to him about the problems.

- What are some respectful ways that Antonio can talk to Michael about the way he is acting?
- How would you respond if you were Antonio? If you were Michael? Have you ever been in this situation?
- It might be tempting to treat Michael the same way he treats others. How can you be kind even when it might difficult to do so?

She then explained that they would be using chart paper to depict the change in the scenario, using words or drawings. She also explained that this activity would take two days to complete. The students were then sent to their collaborative teams to work. All groups had chart paper, markers, and pencils available for use. As they worked, Ms. Stephens circulated the room to listen to the students and provide feedback. Five minutes prior to the end of SEL, Ms. Stephens had the students to bring their activities to a stopping point, and share what they had done so far.

The organization and preparedness displayed by Ms. Stephens were also displayed by Ms. Brown and Ms. Fox. They seemed to treat SEL as they would treat any other content area. Considering that they only have 30 minutes to teach the lesson, their organizational skills thoroughly assisted with the flow of the lesson. Dr. Jones, on the other hand, was not as prepared, and her lesson mimicked Mr. Walker's. Reading directly from the manual, not having the materials prepared, and not knowing what

Perceptions in a Changing World

the lesson consisted of, caused time to be mismanaged and wasted; and also left much to be desired about the SEL program.

“Researchers demonstrated that student achievement is higher in classes where instructional time is maximized” (Stronge, 2007, p. 84). Use of time can be optimized in the classroom by careful planning or prioritization (Stronge, 2007). Effective teachers are organized and plans to address the needs of their students – even in SEL. It is vital for teachers to establish a pattern “so that students can anticipate academic transitions and reduce the loss of instructional time” (Stronge, 2007, p. 84). When teaching social and emotional learning, “a supportive environment includes physical space, equipment and materials, daily structure and planning, as well as the relationships between adults and children” (“Building”, 2015, p. 2). Therefore, the lesson within the learning environment must be carefully planned in order to influence students’ learning and behavior (“Building”, 2015).

“Environments play a critical role in promoting social and emotional development and preventing challenging behavior” (“Promoting”, n.d., para. 3). Therefore, teachers should be intentional when creating and designing an environment suitable for SEL. The spaces should be designed to optimize social interactions between peers, as well as between teachers and students (“Promoting”, n.d.). Because SEL lessons are designed for collaboration, the students may be required to transition throughout the lesson, as was evident in a few of my participants’ classes. Teachers must consider this when designing their space, to ensure that areas are protected from traffic (“Promoting”, n.d.). This means that teachers should not place groups of students near entrances or exits, nor “high traffic areas which children and staff members may need to pass through for materials or other activities” (“Promoting”, n.d., para. 11). “Environments and activities have great potential to support social and emotional development” as long as they are designed with the students’ successes in mind (“Promoting”, n.d., para. 1).

Social emotional teaching strategies. Ms. Brown, Ms. Fox, and Ms. Stephens all seemed to embrace SEL and utilize effective teaching strategies. Each of them tied the SEL lesson to a real issue that a student in their classroom had gone through, or would possibly go through as a student. This interaction with the students helped to develop their self-esteem. I witnessed most of the participants offering genuine praise to their students, however, Ms. Fox did a phenomenal job with this. During the SEL lesson, she found opportunities to praise her students as they worked on the SEL task. Ms. Fox's lesson was on self-control. Ms. Fox used soap bubbles to demonstrate how difficult it is for individuals to control their actions when they are excited or upset. Before getting deep into the lesson, Ms. Fox gave her students time to explore with the bubbles. Each student was given a pack of bubbles to blow in order to determine if they could keep their bubbles in one area. As the students worked, Ms. Fox circled the room offering praise as well as suggestions. She stated, "Kim (pseudonym) you have excellent control of your bubbles! They are all falling directly in front of you" (May 10, 2017). She also suggested, "Mellissa (pseudonym), why don't you try to blow softer to see what happens" (May 10, 2017). As the student followed her suggestions, she continued, "Wow! That seems to work great!" The student smiled seeming to be pleased with her work, as well as her ability to please her teacher.

In all, the participants were accepting of their students' feelings, while avoiding to pass judgment. Because they were prepared for the lesson, Ms. Brown, Ms. Fox, and Ms. Stephens were able to be active listeners during the lessons, which also aids in the development of self-esteem. The three participants also provided instruction that aids in the development of social skills. "Good social skills require good communication skills" (Lawson, 2003, para. 6). Each of the three participants provided many opportunities for their students to communicate with their peers and the teacher. After Ms. Fox's students finished their exploration activity with the soap bubbles, they were expected to communicate their feelings about the task. Ms. Fox first allowed the students to communicate with a partner so that

Perceptions in a Changing World

could collect their thoughts and gain confidence before speaking to a large group; then the students had to share their feelings with the whole group. The students expressed feelings of satisfaction when they were able to control their bubbles, as well as feelings of disappointment when they were unable to control their bubbles – despite the strategies that they used. This was a great segue into Ms. Fox’s lesson, and it provided the students with opportunities to socialize and make connections with other students who share the same experiences during the exploration activity.

By incorporating cooperative activities in the lesson, the participants’ ultimately encouraged and taught sharing, turn taking, and working collaboratively. Mr. Walker and Dr. Jones also incorporated cooperative activities in their SEL lesson. All of the participants seem to have a clear understanding that collaborative learning teams “attain higher level thinking and preserve information for longer times than students working individually” (Clifford, 2012, para. 3). Dr. Jones’ students participated in a lesson focused on improving friendship skills and dealing with bullying through the use of proper communication. During the introduction of the lesson, prior to transitioning to their collaborative groups, Dr. Jones had the students to discuss in small groups on the carpet the importance of communication. The students had to brainstorm different communication methods, and share those methods with the whole class in a larger discussion. The students also had to work collaboratively in teams as they discussed Helen Keller, a person who was blind, deaf, and could not speak. They had to discuss her challenges, and what they could do to overcome those challenges if they were in her shoes. Through the use of the cooperative activities, it was clear that the students felt a sense of support and had built trust within their teams. The small group discussions with peers reduced anxiety while focusing on “enhancing problem-solving and critical thinking skills” (Clifford, 2012, para. 19). Although the cooperative learning activities were embedded in the SEL lesson, because Mr. Walker and Dr. Jones were not prepared, nor had the materials available, the students could not engage with one

another appropriately.

Conclusion

The data from this study resulted in several key findings that addressed the research question, along with the issues/tensions helping to address the complexity of the study. Many findings were consistently evidenced throughout the study and will be highlighted below:

1. The analyzed data underscores that there is a relationship between social and emotional competence and academic achievement.
2. The participants in the study have addressed several challenges when implementing social and emotional learning in urban environments.
3. Managing organizational change during the adoptions of SEL is a difficult process in certain school environments, yet it is attainable if the changes positively impact student outcomes.
4. The participants in the study agree on the idea that teachers must be properly trained on how to develop their students' social and emotional learning skills in order for the program to be effective.
5. There is a need to teach social and emotional skills within culturally relevant contexts.
6. Teachers' social and emotional competencies must be developed and supported in order to properly support students in SEL and improve student learning.
7. Social and emotional learning is not a cure all, and should be paired with other programs to ensure student success.

Overall, the findings contributed to a better understanding of the issues driving the study. The teachers' perceptions about social and emotional learning are positive, yet they have identified tools for support and challenges to success when implementing SEL in a title I urban elementary school. As tools for support, the teachers are in need of proper training in social and emotional learning that goes deeper

Perceptions in a Changing World

than introductory courses. They also need assistance with developing their own social and emotional competencies so that they can be better prepared to implement SEL to their students. Having ongoing support, and systems in place to check the progress of SEL would also be beneficial in the implementing the program effectively.

The findings also emphasize the need for parental support with social and emotional learning in order to further support the development of students' behavioral and academic performance. This has been identified as a challenge to success when implementing social and emotional learning in an urban title I elementary school. Other challenges include the idea that SEL does not address the obstacles that students in urban environments are faced with; implementing organizational change in certain urban environments is more difficult when the culture of the school is one of strong critique; lack of teacher training and preparedness programs that are inclusive of different levels of support throughout the implementation of the program; student tardiness; and the amount of time given to implement SEL strategies.

In review, the findings in this study show positive trends in the growth of the students who are involved in SEL – both academically and behaviorally. However, these improvements have not been consistent for all students, which may be due to the large number of challenges to success as identified by the participants.

The information presented in this chapter embodies a comprehensive examination of the five participants' implementation of social and emotional learning in an urban, title I elementary school in Georgia. The findings illustrate that teacher attitudes alone did not determine how teachers utilize SEL strategies with their students, or their disposition towards the implementation of the program. Rather, it was revealed that a multitude of other issues played a significant role in determining teachers' perceptions concerning the success of social and emotional learning. Therefore, the findings from this

Perceptions in a Changing World

study imply that in order to thoroughly understand how teachers implement educational innovations, one must also consider the environment of the school, teacher's feelings toward organizational change, as well as teacher's comfort levels with the implementation of something new. "Cross-case analysis is a method that facilitates the comparison of commonalities and differences in the events, activities, and processes; the units of analyses in case studies" (saved PDF). In chapter 5, the findings from this study will be merged with the findings from Case Study 2: Providing Support to New Teachers in a Dedicated Mentoring Program, in order to respond to the Question of the multiple case study.

Chapter 5: Cross-Case Analysis

Introduction

"Research in the relationship between teacher attitudes and student performance attests to the pervading assumption that teacher attitudes have a definite impact on a students' learning and development" (Taddeo, 1977, p. 7). It is believed that teacher attitudes and beliefs are significant to the understanding of the success and failures of educational innovations, because their attitudes are deeply connected to the strategies that they use to promote teaching and learning (OECD, 2009). The relationship between teaching and learning is one in which researchers have studied to gain a better understanding of the impact it has on student achievement (OECD, 2009; Taddeo, 1977). Both researchers of this study sought to determine if the attitudes of teachers were hindering the success of teaching and learning through the use of social and emotional learning (SEL) and new teacher mentor (NTM) programs. The researchers conducting the two case studies are currently working as instructional coaches in urban title I school environments, and were interested in the function of teachers' attitudes. A multiple case study including two separate intrinsic cases was employed to determine if SEL and NTM programs were impacted by the teachers charged with implementing them. Prior to the collaborative study, each researcher worked independently to address SEL or NTM programs.

The next part of the chapter will provide a summary of the major findings from Case Study 1: Teachers' Perceptions on Implementing Social and Emotional Learning in a Southern Title I Elementary School; followed by a summary of the major findings from Case Study 2: Providing Support to New Teachers in a Dedicated Mentoring Program. The chapter will continue with a cross-case analysis of both studies, in addition to reflections of future work.

Case Study 1 Major Findings

Successful student achievement is currently comprised of academic skills and social skills (Martinsone, 2016). Schools today have the responsibility of educating the whole child, which increases the school's role in "behavioral and emotion regulation, social awareness and communication" (Martinsone, 2016, p. 57). Due to the school's role being modified to include other elements, social and emotional learning programs have been developed, and are implemented with the purpose of increasing and improving students' social and emotional competencies (Martinsone, 2016; Duckworth & Seligman, 2005). Although the schools have been charged with implementing this shift, it is ultimately the teachers' responsibility to ensure that all of the students' needs are met – both academic and social. Because teachers have a very large influence on how their students achieve, their attitudes may influence how the program is perceived, and may also impact the program's outcomes. This study provided an inquiry into teachers' perceptions and attitudes of implementing the SEL initiative; as well as explored the linkage between social and emotional learning and how students learn.

Aiming to explore the effects of teachers' attitudes toward the implementation of SEL, an intrinsic case study was employed using semi-structured interviews and observations to gain an understanding of the perceptions of five elementary teachers in an urban title I elementary school. The findings of this study were focused on responding to the research question driving this particular case:

- What do teachers perceive as both tools for support and challenges to success when implementing social and emotional learning (SEL) in a title I urban elementary school?

The findings were presented in accordance with the issues/tensions helping to address the complexity of the study, which are outlined below:

- Do teachers at LJS Elementary (pseudonym) see a relationship between social emotional competence and academic achievement?

Perceptions in a Changing World

- Is there an effective approach that can be used to manage organizational change during the adaption of SEL?
- Is there an effective method that can be used to prepare teachers to teach social and emotional learning?

The outcome of the study included seven key findings that addressed the research question along with the issues/tensions:

1. The analyzed data, presented in chapter 4, underscores that there is a relationship between social and emotional competence and academic achievement.
2. The participants in the study have addressed several challenges when implementing social and emotional learning in urban environments.
3. Managing organizational change during the adoption of SEL is a difficult process in certain school environments, yet it is attainable if the changes positively impact student outcomes.
4. The participants in the study agree on the idea that teachers must be properly trained on how to develop their students' social and emotional learning skills in order for the program to be effective.
5. There is a need to teach social and emotional skills within culturally relevant contexts.
6. Teachers' social and emotional competencies must be developed and supported in order to properly support students in SEL and improve student learning.
7. Social and emotional learning is not a cure all, and should be paired with other programs to ensure student success.

Determination of Major Findings

The key findings worked together to further illuminate the research question: What do teachers perceive as both tools for support and challenges to success when implementing social and emotional learning in a title I urban elementary school? While the teachers identified a positive relationship between social emotional competence and academic achievement, they have encountered several challenges when implementing social and emotional learning in an urban environment. The main challenges included the lack of compassion, common knowledge, and collaborative skills contained by the students; as well as the lack of parental involvement.

One of the most challenging characteristics of education presently is the management of change (Fullan, 2002). However, the findings in this study illustrate that the management of organizational change during the adoption of SEL is difficult, yet attainable if the changes are beneficial for the students. Ms. Fox stated:

If the changes that are made can be, if I see evidence that the changes will work, then I have no problem with making changes at work. It's just when I see that it hasn't been well planned and well thought out, and I feel that there's not going to be a positive impact, those are the changes that I typically am reluctant to make. (May 9, 2017, lines 155-158)

Similarly, Ms. Brown commented:

Change for me, it's hard at times, because you get accustomed to doing things a certain way. But, once you set your mind to something and you analyze the situation and realize that it would be better for everyone that's involved, and then it would be a lot, you know, smoother for me to agree on change. But change in any situation is difficult at first. (April 28, 2017, lines 138-141)

Perceptions in a Changing World

Many researchers believe that teachers struggle with social and emotional learning because they have not been properly trained (Bouffard, 2014; Schonert-Reichl & Zakrzewski, 2014; Suttie, 2011). The participants in this study agree. They reported that they have received very little training on how to properly implement social and emotional learning. They participated in learning sessions where they have acquired knowledge about what social and emotional learning is, and how it applies to their life as adults, yet they did not learn how to pass it on to the students in order to help them grow as productive beings. When asked if they have been prepared to teach social and emotional learning, Ms. Fox responded, “I’ve received some training, but I think more training is needed. It hasn’t been extensive. It’s been surface. This is how you implement the program, but not in depth training” (May 9, 2017, lines 57-58). Dr. Jones stated:

Yes, they did do some types of workshops but I do believe that there needs to be a more in depth training. Their training was at like a beginner level, but now that we have begun, where do we go from here. (April 27, 2017, lines 49-51)

Ms. Brown and Ms. Stephens answered similarly to Ms. Fox and Dr. Jones. They both answered yes, they have been trained, but believe that more extensive training needs to follow the initial training. Mr. Walker, on the other hand, answered, “No, not at all” (May 17, 2017, line 43), when asked had he been prepared to teach social and emotional learning. He further explained:

I guess they call those meetings that we had training, but they were not. I mean, I learned a lot about SEL itself and how it applies to my life, and why it is important, but I was not trained on how to teach to my students or how to fit it in my schedule. No, no, not at all. (May 17, 2017, lines 43-45)

Perceptions in a Changing World

Although believing that a relationship exists between social and emotional competence and academic achievement, the participants continued to question whether or not SEL would work for their students. Dr. Jones revealed:

Well, I think that people who implement, or who started social and emotional learning really thought that it would work for all children, and it does not work for all children. It just depends on the child itself. Some children, with fewer issues, they will do fine with SEL, but there are some children who need something more than SEL, and it's hard when we have to try to keep everyone inside of a bubble that they do not fit in. (April 27, 2017, lines 64-68)

Mr. Walker shared a similar concern. He stated:

It just doesn't work with all of the kids. Like I said earlier, I have about four kids that SEL is just not working for. It just doesn't get to them. I'm trying to help them, but, I won't say that they're so far gone, but they're just, I don't know, the streets may have them I would say, and unfortunately, SEL doesn't work in the streets. (May 17, 2017, lines 62-65)

This also speaks to the perceptions of challenges of the participants when implementing SEL in a title I urban elementary school.

As the participants shared a day in their lives as teachers, it was apparent that their days were filled with perfunctory tasks that they do automatically and without being present. They do not have time for personal reflection, or any interpersonal conversations outside of work. This type of lifestyle leads teachers down the path to burnout, and is most likely caused by teachers' lack of social and emotional skills (Zakrzewski, 2013).

In order to support students in SEL and improve student learning, teachers should possess strong social and emotional competencies (Jones, Bouffard, & Weissbourd, 2013). Because the teachers in this

Perceptions in a Changing World

study do not possess these competencies, they must be built through "coaching and other forms of support" as a means of serving as models for their students (Jones, Bouffard, & Weissbourd, 2013, p. 62). While serving as models happen inevitably, teachers are not always equipped to handle all of their students' affairs. As the participants spoke about moments of sadness in their careers as teachers, many of them spoke of obstacles that their students are faced with. During these obstacles, it seemed that not even SEL could help. Ms. Brown shared:

Yes. I had a student, just last year, who is faced with all type of obstacles that are in her paths, in her way. She, has a very difficult home life and it rolls over into school on a daily basis. She's having a hard time adjusting to the SEL implementation. She, is basically in a field all on her own. It's hard for her to adapt to rules and procedures that are put in place at school because she doesn't have that same stability at home. She's very aggressive. She is physically violent and verbally abusive. And, with SEL, I just can't really see that really helping a child in that type of environment or setting. (April 28, 2017, lines 109-115)

Similarly, Ms. Stephens expressed:

Sad...I've had a lot of sad moments, but I'll speak on one. Sad is not being able to help a student that you know they're in a situation that you know is not in their control. One in particular is a student that I have, they're moving from place to place, and I look at the background information of that student, and that student has been to several schools throughout their elementary school years, and currently still bouncing around from house to house, and not able to bring up grades, and just, scores are not on grade level and that's sad being that I know that the student is trying, but have circumstances that they can't control. And this is where I feel like SEL is not a tool that could help all students. Because all students don't deal with stuff like this. All students don't

Perceptions in a Changing World

have these types of issues. But for the ones that do, SEL doesn't tell them how to cope with real life issues. (May 9, 2017, lines 96-102)

The other participants' thoughts about the limitations of SEL are similar to Ms. Brown's and Ms. Stephens'. There are several issues that burden students in urban environments. As a result, there may be several remedies to assist with solving all of their issues. Other resources may need to be utilized in conjunction with SEL in order for its impact to extend to all students. As the teachers have reported, social and emotional learning is useful and should be used as a tool for students in urban environments. However, it may need to accompany other innovations that have also been proven to be effective.

Overall, the findings revealed enhanced growth in the students who were involved in social and emotional learning. However, these improvements were not consistent for all students. The conducted study did not reveal a clear impact of teachers' attitudes alone affecting the implementation of SEL – mainly because the teachers' perceptions of the program itself were positive; however, the study presented a number of other concerns that prevented the teachers from fully believing that SEL can be successful in title I urban environments.

Case Study 2 Major Findings

In this case study, I explored the perceptions of novice teachers who were participating in a year-long new teacher mentor program. The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions and use the findings to make revisions to the program to improve the effectiveness of its implementation. The following research questions were used to guide the examination of the study:

1. How can the experiences of novice teachers be used to improve a new teacher mentor program in a local school?

Perceptions in a Changing World

2. According to the perceptions of novice teachers, what does it mean to effectively implement a new teacher mentor program at a local school?
3. Are the teachers' perceptions of the mentor program at a local school influencing its implementation? If so, how can we use them to improve the mentoring program?

One major finding of this study is all of the teachers reported that the components of the program were effective and helpful. Participants in the program were assigned a mentor, required to attend topic sessions, engaged in scheduled mentor/mentee discussions, and observed their mentor teach at least one lesson. The participants even suggested to add more sessions during the school year to offer more support to teachers. This was surprising because in my years of education I have often experienced teachers voicing their concerns about not having enough time to complete all of their responsibilities and expectations from administration. The desire for more topic sessions support the conclusion that the participants felt as though the program sessions were meaningful and relevant and wanted more support throughout the year.

During the analysis of the data, I also found that participants perceived the scheduled mentor/mentee discussions to be very helpful and were pleased that they had ample time to meet with their mentor. Participants shared that the discussions helped them by receiving advice about classroom management skills and instructional strategies. Observational notes revealed the mentees seemed very comfortable with their mentors, suggesting they have had a sufficient amount of time to develop a positive bond. For example, during a discussion between Amirah and her mentor, she joked about her struggles with her students completing homework and there was even a "high-five" exchange between the pair. Fran was able to voice her concerns about her challenging fifth period class with her mentor. She explained that she is at a loss of how to address the difficult behaviors in her classroom and asked her mentor for advice. This observation appears to support the finding that Fran felt a high level of

Perceptions in a Changing World

comfortability with her mentor to admit that she is having a problem with classroom management.

There may be a few different reasons of why the mentees felt comfortable. One possibility is that the mentors may have displayed favorable characteristics that created an atmosphere of trust and respect, such as compassion, subject knowledge, and professionalism. Another possibility is mentees and mentors spent a sufficient amount of time to build a bond that fostered a positive relationship that consist of comfort. As a result, mentors are able to provide not only career support but psychosocial support as well (Kram, 1983).

The overall perceptions of the novice teachers were very positive. All participants praised all four components of the program: mentor support, topic sessions, mentor/mentee discussions, and peer observations. Participants even voiced that they would like more support offered on a more consistent basis. On that basis, the perceptions of the new teachers are not hindering the implementation of the program. The program is not seen as irrelevant or “something else we have to do.” Instead, it is viewed as a valued resource that has help improve the participants’ pedagogical skills and professional knowledge.

However, there are other components of the program that were not explored during this study, which may hinder the program’s implementation. For example, the mentors that were selected to participate in the program did not receive any professional development. Therefore, without a formal mentor evaluation protocol, it is difficult to assess if the mentors’ performance met the program coordinator’s expectations. Although, each participant expressed positive experiences with their mentor, the mentees’ expectations may not have aligned with the coordinator’s or administration’s expectations.

In summary, the key findings from this study are:

1. Participants viewed the scheduled mentor/mentee discussion as helpful.

Perceptions in a Changing World

2. Mentor observations were effective and perceived as a valuable experience.
3. Topic sessions were relevant and viewed in a positive manner; however, participants would like more sessions scheduled throughout the duration of the program.
4. Novice teachers expressed they received a sufficient amount of mentor support.

The study's findings have illuminated the research questions that have guided the examination of the novice teachers' perceptions. The data has revealed that the implementation of the program is viewed as effective. Therefore, the coordinator should continue to implement the current components of the program. Although, positive views were recorded, the participants did voice a desire to engage in more topic sessions more frequently; thus, alluding to the conclusion that the topic sessions were helpful.

Cross-Case Analysis

According to Cruzes, Dyba, Runeson, & Host (2015), cross-case analysis "is a method that facilitates the comparison of commonalities and differences in the events, activities, and processes; the units of analyses in case studies" (p. 6). In this section, we share our interpretations of the data found in our joint collaborative study. The data presented here emerged through the discourse with nine participants that oftentimes responded to the overall question driving the multiple case study:

- Are teachers' attitudes hindering the success of educational innovations that promote teaching and learning?

Prior to the joint collaborative study, both researchers conducted independent case studies with completely different research questions. Case Study 1 explored the concept of learning through the implementation of social and emotional learning, while Case Study 2 examined the concept of teaching through the implementation of new teacher mentor programs. Although, the independent intrinsic case studies were different, the researchers conducted a cross-case analysis to identify the similarities that address the aforementioned overarching research question.

Are teachers' attitudes hindering the success of educational innovations that promote teaching and learning? In response to our overall research question, our participant interviews, focus groups, and observation data revealed that teachers' attitudes alone are not hindering the success of educational innovations that promote teaching and learning. In Case Study 1, all of the participants agreed that SEL has the ability to transform school culture and academic success. Ms. Brown commented that social and emotional learning “teaches the kids how to show empathy for one another, and it builds community within the classroom; which basically helps them with working together, and achieving their goals that they set for themselves throughout the day” (April 28, 2017, lines 26-28). Dr. Jones also attributes the progressive changes that she has seen in her students' behavior and academics to social and emotional learning:

With the implementation of SEL, I have seen a change in some of my students' behavior, as well as their academics. I know that if we continue with SEL, and we do it the right way, our students could really thrive. The culture that our students are accustomed to is toxic. They don't know how to get along with one another or communicate appropriately with one another. They talk mean to each other, and can't really express themselves, because they've never been taught how to. I know that SEL can help them to learn how to change their culture, and their ways of thinking. (April 27, 2017, lines 27-33)

In case study 2, participants shared positive comments about their experience in the new teacher mentor program. Fran stated,

I feel the program helped me a lot. Going to the sessions monthly helped me with classroom management and engagement. I was always able to go to my mentor for help or support. I was also able to go to other mentors in the program and I wouldn't have felt comfortable doing this otherwise if I wasn't part of the new teacher mentor program. For instance, I would often go to

Perceptions in a Changing World

Angel's mentor for help since he has taught seventh grade Social Studies before and I would also talk to him during the sessions. I think you should extend this opportunity to the teachers that may get hired in the middle of the year (May 10, 2017, lines 62-68).

Amirah also expressed similar sentiments by saying, "This program is very beneficial. Being new to the school and teaching, I sometimes wasn't sure how to teach certain concepts in Science and how to deal with disruptive students. But the sessions and my mentor helped me with that" (May 10, 2017, lines 58-60). However, a host of other concerns significantly impact the outcomes of those educational innovations. In the following discussion, we explain how the findings from each of our intrinsic case studies have influenced the cross-case's major findings found below:

1. Teachers' attitudes are not hindering the success of educational innovations for teaching and learning.
2. Teacher training may affect the success of educational innovations for teaching and learning.
3. Unique contextual factors in urban title I schools impact teachers' attitudes toward educational innovations for teaching and learning.

Major finding 1: Teachers' attitudes are not hindering the success of educational innovations for teaching and learning. The word attitude is oftentimes referenced as negative (Lautzenheiser, 2017). When an attitude is discussed, "it is generally interpreted as a description of a less-than-favorable disposition displayed by the individual-in-question" (Lautzenheiser, 2017, para. 2). However, the reality is that all individuals have attitudes. The key is to determine what type of attitude is exhibited (Lautzenheiser, 2017). In both case studies, the researchers found that teachers displayed positive attitudes toward social and emotional learning programs, as well as new teacher mentoring programs; therefore, concluding that their attitudes were not hindering the success of either program as evidenced

Perceptions in a Changing World

in the section above, as well the chart below (*See Chart 1*). The chart displays the number of positive terms used to describe both SEL and NTM programs, and the number of times they were used.

Chart 1. Terms and Iterations that Support Participants' Positive Attitudes

Terms	<i>Iterations</i>
Helpful	<i>43</i>
Effective	<i>27</i>
Beneficial	<i>21</i>

Teachers whom implemented SEL believed that the program can transform school culture and academic success. The participants had observed the improvements made by the students at LJS Elementary since being involved in social and emotional learning. The SEL program has had positive effects on the students' attitudes toward self, as well as their social behaviors. Novice teachers whom engaged in a new teacher mentor program praised the program components for offering sufficient support and provided the opportunity to enhance their professional skills.

At the present time, educational innovations adopted by different schools and districts are excessive, and vary quickly from one program to another (Ferriter, 2013). Because of this, teachers do not usually buy into the programs – they just wait for the next program to begin and replace the current one. However, social and emotional learning, and new teacher mentor programs have proven to not follow this same trend. According to the data collected in this study, the teachers have bought-in and are experiencing benefits. This finding aligns with the ideas posed by Ferriter who states that "teachers buy into change efforts that they believe are important" (2013, para. 4). Teachers must realize a need for program implementation, and must believe in the common goal of the program in order for them to display positive attitudes toward the program. As evidenced by *Chart 1*, the teachers involved in this multiple case study display positive attitudes towards both SEL and NTM programs.

Major finding 2: Teacher training may affect the success of educational innovations for teaching and learning. When deciding to implement new educational innovations or initiatives, leaders must identify a plan of support for all individuals who are expected to implement the program. Bennet states, "Deep change demands the acquisition of new knowledge and skills for teachers, and transformative learning that affects their beliefs about teaching and learning (Bennet, 2007, p. 18). A key factor in failed educational programs is the lack of sufficient support that is given to teachers; this includes professional development that teaches the individuals how to effectively implement the innovation or initiative. In Case Study 1, participants expressed the need for more training on how to implement the components of SEL. For instance, one of the participants stated, "I've received some training, but I think more training is needed. It hasn't been extensive. It's been surface. This is how you implement the program, but not in-depth training" (May 9, 2017, lines 57-58).

The topic sessions that were included in the new teacher mentor program were used as professional learning opportunities for the participants in Case Study 2. Participants expressed that the topic sessions were helpful but suggested providing more opportunities for professional development. Fran stated,

I don't feel the need to change the topics. I would add a topic on differentiation. I think this is an area where not only new teachers, but most teachers struggle with because there are so many different learning styles and levels in the classroom. It would also be helpful to have more sessions that go deeper into data and other things we have to do at the school (May 10, 2017, lines 10-12)

Amirah also voiced that she was pleased with the topic sessions but would also add a session regarding how to effectively use data to make instructional decisions. In both case studies, participants expressed the need for more professional learning experiences. Initial and introductory training alone is not

Perceptions in a Changing World

enough. Teachers need a sufficient amount of professional learning to sustain the strategies and skills that are being learned (Buchanan, Gueldner, Tran, & Merrell, 2009). In addition, professional learning should be differentiated to meet the specific needs of teachers to build teacher confidence and guarantee the fulfillment of the program. Providing more opportunities for new teachers to engage in professional development creates an avenue for a change in teacher practice and beliefs; thus, helping teachers learn more effective strategies to implement to address daily challenges (Mizell, 2010, p. 6).

Major finding 3: Unique contextual factors in urban title I schools impact teachers' attitudes toward educational innovations for teaching and learning. "It is important to note that the challenges facing urban schools are not entirely unique to specific areas, nor are all urban schools confronted with the same challenges" (Ahram, Stenbridge, Fergus, & Noguera, 2011, para. 3). This is also true for title I schools. Urban title I schools "do, however, share some unique physical and demographic characteristics that differentiate them from suburban and rural schools" (Ahram, Stenbridge, Fergus, & Noguera, 2011, para. 3). As evidenced by our research, the participants' implementing social and emotional learning experienced more challenges than the participants' implementing the new teacher mentor program – although they all were in urban title I school environments. As reported by one of the participants in case study 1 who has worked in urban environments for over twenty years, "this school environment is one of strong critique, and it plays a part in my ability to be able to change" (May 9, 2017, lines 160-161). She, as well as other participants, did not speak on the typical challenges that all urban environments face, yet a focus was placed on the specific challenges involving LJS Elementary School – which speaks to the culture of the school environment.

The new teacher mentor program focused on the teachers who are receiving support in order to assist with their transition into a lifelong, successful career in teaching. Participants in case study 2

Perceptions in a Changing World

reported the support received from the new teacher mentor program was sufficient in helping them address common challenges that are seen in Title I schools. For example, Angel stated,

I came from teaching pre-school so I had no idea of what I was doing. I wasn't used to having really low kids and really high kids all in the same class so one day I asked my mentor if he had the same issue and he said yes. So I asked him how he dealt with it. He gave me some helpful differentiation strategies. He even gave me the activities for a lesson that he had already differentiated by making tiered activities. (May 10, 2017, lines 52-56)

The participants in case study 1 expressed a concern with implementing SEL with fidelity due to the unique contextual factor of the school environment. On the contrary, the participants in case study 2 felt as though the NTM program could be implemented effectively due to the contextual factors of their school environment. While both school environments are deemed as title I, they are both very different. One environment was viewed as one in which it is difficult to implement change, while the other was viewed as the opposite. On that account, contextual factors, or environments, can affect teachers' attitudes toward implementing educational innovative programs as evidenced by the participants' experiences in our study.

Reflection of Future Work

Case study 1. Thus far, limited research exists examining the implementation of social and emotional learning in urban, title I elementary school environments (Yoder, 2014). By completing this study in an environment such as this, it allowed me the opportunity to uncover distinctive challenges faced by the teachers charged with the implementation of SEL and discover if their attitudes toward the program impacted its outcomes. While this study offered a comprehensive stance of the participants' experiences with social and emotional learning, only five participants were examined, and they were all stationed at one site. An analysis of a larger number of teachers in diverse urban, title I settings would

Perceptions in a Changing World

provide more evidence of the supports and challenges encountered when implementing SEL; as well as the program's impact on student learning.

In order to improve social and emotional learning at LJS Elementary School, the parents must be included so that students are supported at school and at home (Durlak, Weissberg, Taylor, Dymnick, & Schellinger, 2008) Because the students are regularly engulfed in stressful situations outside of school, it is dire that the individuals outside of school are aware of the strategies that the students are being taught in order to cope with those stressful situations. The social and emotional learning curricula must also be revised to include more activities culturally relevant to students in urban environments. The topics covered in the Second Step program are inclusive of the five social and emotional competencies that all students must learn in order to effectively deal with daily tasks and challenges. However, those tasks and challenges differ in different communities. Perhaps the scenarios can be altered to include types of issues encountered by students at LJS Elementary School. The teachers are also in need of ongoing training in SEL that explicitly teaches them how to implement SEL components such as class meetings, student self-management, and student collaboration. Social and emotional learning training for teachers is essential, and directly aligned to student success. With proper training, teachers will be able to effectively implement SEL strategies, and use the selected SEL program to create positive learning environments (Schonert-Reichl & Zakrzewski, 2014).

During this study, the participants wrote narratives to describe a day in their life as a teacher. The narratives provided powerful data, as well as an insight to the participants' personal struggles with SEL. Future research could include the voices of the students, written by students involved in social and emotional learning, to compare the lives of the teachers to the lives of the students, in addition to enrich the understanding of this particular phenomenon. Based on the data gathered from the teachers' narratives alone, I am sure that the students' narratives would be just as eye-opening. It would be

Perceptions in a Changing World

interesting and profound to note if there is a strong complement between the teachers' lives and students' lives. If not, it would be detrimental to uncover biases held by the teachers, and teach them how to be culturally relevant teachers in this environment.

Case study 2. Although I was able to gather sufficient data by examining the mentees' perceptions through individual interviews, a focus group, and observational notes to address the research questions, I would recommend expanding the study to exploring the perceptions of the mentors as well. It is just as pertinent to be aware of how the mentors view the effectiveness of the implementation of the program per their perception could affect the success of the program. If mentors do not feel as though their work is valued or they are not given adequate time to support their mentee, then there may be a lack of fidelity in regard to implementation. Mentors could give a perspective that can be used to improve the structure of the program; thus, possibly yielding a higher level of effectiveness.

Another recommendation for future work is to include a larger sample of participants in order to gain a broader view of the type of support that mentees' feel is needed for novice teachers. This being said, I would seek participation from the surrounding schools with similar demographics as the initial study site. The criteria for sampling would remain the same, however, the study would now examine novice teachers' perceptions of different new teacher mentor programs at different local schools. The research could take a multi-case study approach and continue with a cross-case analysis. The findings from this study can inform each individual local school about the effectiveness of the implementation of their program and give a broader perspective about specific components of new teacher mentor programs that novice teachers find helpful.

In regard to recommendations for improving the new teacher mentor program, I would suggest providing professional development for the selected mentors. The coordinator of the program could provide professional development or identify an organization/consultant to provide professional

Perceptions in a Changing World

development to the mentors. Research suggests that developing mentorship skills amongst veteran teachers will equip them with the necessary skills to provide adequate support to novice teachers (Whitebook & Bellm, 2014). Mentors should assess their own competence in the areas of relationship building content knowledge (Whitebook & Bellm, 2014). Being a master teacher isn't the only characteristic that is needed to be an effective mentor. Therefore, programs should adopt a research-based model or framework as a guide to develop proficient mentors; thus, providing the program coordinator with specific criteria and a clear understanding of the skills needed to become an effective mentor.

Leaders should also consider identifying criteria for mentor selection. At the site of study, mentors were selected based upon administrator referral. If administrators deemed the individual as a "good teacher" with a "good attitude," then he/she was recommended to be a mentor. However, studies suggest that mentor criteria should be based upon several factors such as knowledge, communication skills, years of experience, and a personable disposition, but are not limited to these characteristics (Maria-Monica & Alina, 2011; Maria-Monica & Alina, 2013; Pogrud & Cowan, 2013).

I was surprised to find that there were not any negative perceptions from any of the participants. Although, the participants suggested to increase the amount of sessions that mentees and mentors are expected to attend, this suggestion was given in a very positive manner. As to suggest that the sessions were helpful and that they needed more. I believe the absence of any negative findings may be due to the fact that I play two roles in this study. I am not only the researcher, but the coordinator of the program as well. Therefore, participants may not feel as though they can be completely open with me about their concerns. There may have been a barrier of openness with me as an attempt to not upset me by voicing negative comments about the program. As a recommendation for future work, I would suggest the data

Perceptions in a Changing World

collection be conducted by someone who is not directly involved with the development, coordination, or monitoring of the program.

Conclusion

Exploring teachers' attitudes towards educational innovations for teaching and learning provides insight to the success of program implementation. An essential factor of the program's success is based upon the teachers' commitment to implement its components with fidelity. Therefore, program value and teacher buy-in are imperative. As we sought to examine the teachers' attitudes toward the implementation of educational innovations, we found that other factors, outside of teachers' attitudes, impact the ideas of teaching and learning. Both the social and emotional learning, and new teacher mentor programs have findings that demonstrate their success. This study provides additional data that validates previous findings. This study further finds that specific school needs in urban title I schools may impact teachers' attitude in regard to state, district, or local school mandated programs. Although their attitudes regarding the programs are positive, we are aware that professional development for teachers plays an important role in equipping teachers with the required skills to implement strategies and resources with fidelity. Therefore, planning and executing a plan for professional development is needed to support implementation.

Teachers engaged in using SEL may need professional development with implementing required components of the program. This would require teachers to receive ongoing support addressing class meetings, student relationship building, and student affirmations. The professional learning would be specific to showing teachers how to implement the aforementioned components. Receiving professional learning on implementation can aid teachers in engaging in the program with fidelity.

As stated earlier, teachers would engage in several opportunities for professional development as a result of being a participant in the new teacher mentor program. Instead of meeting once a month for

Perceptions in a Changing World

specific sessions, the participants would need to meet at least bi-weekly for continued support. We hope that this study offers insights into how to further assist teachers in urban title I schools as they seek to positively impact teaching and learning.

References

Social and Emotional Learning

- Ahram, R., Stenbridge, A., Fergus, E., & Noguera, P. (2011). Framing urban school challenges: The problems to examine when implementing response to intervention. Retrieved from <http://www.rtinetwork.org/learn/diversity/urban-school-challenges>
- Atlas.ti: Qualitative data analysis. (2016). Retrieved from www.atlas.ti.com
- Bennett, D. S. (2007). *Teacher efficacy in the implementation of new curriculum supported by professional development* (dissertation). The University of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada.
- Brackett, M. A., Reyes, M. R., Rivers, S. E., Elbertson, N. A., & Salovey, P. (2012). Assessing teachers' beliefs about social and emotional learning. *Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment*, 30(3), 219-236.
- Buchanan, R., Gueldner, B. A., Tran, O. K., & Merrell, K. W. (2009) Social and emotional learning in classrooms: A survey of teachers' knowledge, perceptions, and practices. *Journal of Applied School Psychology*, 25(2), 187-203.
- Building supportive environments: Companion document for Massachusetts standards for preschool and kindergarten social and emotional learning and approaches to play and learning.* (2015). Retrieved from www.doe.mass.edu/kindergarten/SEL-APL-Env.docx
- Carpenter, D. R. (2007). Phenomenology as method. In H. J. Streubert & D. R. Carpenter (Eds.), *Qualitative research in nursing: Advancing the humanistic imperative* (pp. 75- 99). Philadelphia, PA: Lippincott.
- Chamberlain, B. (2009). Phenomenology: A qualitative method. *Clinical Nurse Specialist*, Retrieved from http://www.nursingcenter.com/pdfjournal?AID=844810&an=00002800-200903000-00003&Journal_ID=54033&Issue_ID=844804

Perceptions in a Changing World

Clifford, M. (2012). Facilitating collaborative learning: 20 things you need to know from the pros.

Retrieved from <http://www.opencolleges.edu.au/informed/features/facilitating-collaborative-learning-20-things-you-need-to-know-from-the-pros/>

Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning [CASEL]. (2015). Recent work of CASEL and colleagues. Retrieved from <https://casel.squarespace.com/recent-featured-work-of-casel-colleagues>

Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Duckworth, A. S., & Seligman, M. E. P. (2005) Self-discipline outdoes IQ in predicting academic performance of adolescents. *Psychological Science*, 16(12), 939-944. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-9280.2005.01641.x

Durham-Barnes, J. (2011). The balancing act: The personal and professional challenges of urban teachers. *Urban Education Journal*, 9(1). Retrieved from <http://www.urbanedjournal.org/archive/volume-9-issue-1-fall-2011/balancing-act-personal-and-professional-challenges-urban-teachers>

EDRS 9100 advanced qualitative research methods: Module 3: 5+1 Research Traditions.

Phenomenology. (n.d.). [PowerPoint slides]. Retrieved from [file:///C:/Users/tcovington/Downloads/Module3-Presentation-accessible-Phenomenology%20\(3\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/tcovington/Downloads/Module3-Presentation-accessible-Phenomenology%20(3).pdf)

EDRS 9100 advanced qualitative research methods: Module 7: Designing and focusing qualitative studies. (n.d.). [PowerPoint slides]. Retrieved from

Perceptions in a Changing World

[file:///C:/Users/tcovington/Downloads/Module7-Presentation-accessible%20\(5\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/tcovington/Downloads/Module7-Presentation-accessible%20(5).pdf)

Edwards, R. & Holland, J. (2013). *What is qualitative interviewing?* New York, NY: Bloomsbury Academic.

Farnham, L., Fernando, G., Perigo, M., Brosman, C., & Tough, P. (2015). Rethinking how students succeed. Retrieved from http://ssir.org/up_for_debate/article/rethinking_how_students_succeed

Fischer, C. T. (2009). Bracketing in qualitative research: Conceptual and practical matters. *Psychotherapy Research*, 19(4/5), 583-590. doi: 10.1080/10503300902798375

Fullan, M. (2002). The change leader. *Educational Leadership*, 59(8), 16-21.

Garner, P. W., Mahatmya, D., Brown, E. L., & Vesely, C. K. (2014). Promoting desirable outcomes among culturally and ethnically diverse children in social emotional learning programs: A multilevel heuristic model. *Springer Science+Business Media New York*, 26, 165-189. doi: 10.1007/s10648-014-9253-7

Hatch, J. A. (2002). *Doing qualitative research in education settings*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.

Holloway, I. (1997). *Basic concepts for qualitative research*. Oxford: Blackwell Science.

Janesick, V. J. (2004). *Stretching exercises for qualitative researchers*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Joseph, G. E., & Strain, P. (2003). Comprehensive evidence-based social-emotional curricula for young children. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education*, 23, 62-73.

Lawson, C. (2003). Social skills and school. Retrieved from <http://www.cdl.org/articles/social-skills-and-school/>

Lichtman, M. (2011). Qualitative research in education: A user's guide. *Modern Language Journal*, 401. doi: 10.1111/j.1540-4781.2011.01212_14.x

Martinsone, B. (2016). Social emotional learning: implementation of sustainability-oriented program in latvia. *Journal of Teacher Education for Sustainability*, 18(1), 57-68. doi: 10.1515/jtes-2016-

- Maxwell, J. A. (2008). Designing a qualitative study, in L. Bickman & D.J. Rog (Eds.), *Handbook of Applied Social Science Research Methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage (Chapter 7).
- Maxwell, J. A. (2013). *Qualitative research design: an interactive approach*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Mind Yeti. (2017). Getting the mind ready to learn. Retrieved from <http://www.secondstep.org/mind-yeti-mindfulness>
- Moustaka, E. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- OECD. (2009). Teaching practices, teachers' beliefs and attitudes. Retrieved from <https://www.oecd.org/berlin/43541655.pdf>
- Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Pink, W. T. (1992). The politics of reforming urban schools. *Education and Urban Society*, 25(1), 96-113.
- Price, H. (2015). Social and emotional development: The next school reform frontier. Retrieved from <http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/papers/2015/05/01-price-nclb/price--education-42815.pdf>
- Promoting social-emotional development through supportive environments and activities*. (n.d.)
Retrieved from <https://www.virtuallabschool.org/tcs/social-emotional/lesson-3>
- Ravitch, S., & Riggan, M. (2012). *Research & rigor: How conceptual frameworks guide research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Roe, M. J. (2015). Connecting learning to career pathways. *Leadership*, 44(5), 23-37.
- Rubin, H. J. & Rubin, I. (2005). *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Perceptions in a Changing World

- Sargeant, J. (2012). Qualitative research part II: Participants, analysis, and quality assurance. *Journal of Graduate Medical Education*, 4(1), 1-3. doi: 10.4300/IJGME-D-11-00307.1
- Schonert-Reichl, K., & Zakrzewski, V. (2014). How to close the social-emotional gap in teacher training. Retrieved from http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how_to_close_the_social_emotional_gap_in_teacher_training
- Shenton, A. K. (2004). Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects. *Education for Information*, 22, 63-75. Retrieved from [file:///C:/Users/tcovington/Downloads/Shenton-2004-Trustworthiness%2520in%2520Qualitative%2520Research%20\(1\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/tcovington/Downloads/Shenton-2004-Trustworthiness%2520in%2520Qualitative%2520Research%20(1).pdf)
- Simmons, D. (2017). Is social-emotional learning really going to work for students of color? *Education Week*. Retrieved from <http://www.edweek.org/tm/articles/2017/06/07/we-need-to-redefine-social-emotional-learning-for.html>
- Seidman, I. (2013). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education & the social sciences*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Slaten, C. D., Irby, D. J., Tate, K., & Rivera, R. (2015). Towards a critically conscious approach to social and emotional learning in urban alternative education: School staff members' perspective. *Journal for Social Action in Counseling and Psychology*, 7(1), 41-62.
- Stake, R. E. (2010). *Qualitative research: Studying how things work*. New York, NY: The Guilford Press.
- Stake, R. E. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Stronge, J. H. (2007). *Qualities of effective teachers 2nd edition*. (Chapter 4). Retrieved from

Perceptions in a Changing World

<http://www.ascd.org/publications/books/105156/chapters/Planning-and-Organizing-for-Instruction.aspx>

Suttie, J. (2011, September 20). Does SEL make the grade? [Web log message]. Retrieved from http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/sel_make_the_grade

The four stages of learning and what they mean to teachers. (2016). Retrieved from <http://www.usgtf.com/the-four-stages-of-learning-and-what-they-mean-to-teachers/>

Transcribe: transcribe audio/interviews. (2015). Retrieved from <https://chrome.google.com/webstore/detail/transcribe-transcribe-aud/ogokenmicnjdfhmfhmcnoemnddmpcjjm>

Wang, M. C., Haertel, G. D., & Walberg, H. J. (1993). Toward a knowledge base for school learning. *Review of Educational Research*, 63(3), 249-294. doi: 10.3102/100346543063003249

Wells, A. S., Fox, L., Cordova-Cobo, D. (2016). How racially diverse schools and classrooms can benefit all students. Retrieved from <https://tcf.org/content/report/how-racially-diverse-schools-and-classrooms-can-benefit-all-students/>

Weissberg, R. (2016). Why social and emotional learning is essential for students. Retrieved from <https://www.edutopia.org/blog/why-sel-essential-for-students-weissberg-durlak-domitrovich-gullotta>

Yoder, N. (2014). *Teaching the whole child: Instructional practices that support social-emotional learning in three teacher evaluation frameworks.* Retrieved from <http://www.gtlcenter.org/sites/default/files/TeachingtheWholeChild.pdf>

New Teacher Mentor Program

Davis, E., Sinclair, S., & Gschwend, L. (2015). A mentoring program drills down on the Common Core. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 96(6), 59-64. doi:10.1177/0031721715575302

Perceptions in a Changing World

- Hennissen, P., Crasborn, F, Brouwer, N., Korthagen, F., & Bergen, T. (2011). Clarifying pre-service teacher perceptions of mentor teachers' developing use of mentoring skills. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 27 (2011), 1049-1058.
- Ingersoll, R. M., & Strong, M. (2011). The impact of induction and mentoring programs for beginning teachers: A critical review of the research. *Review of Educational Research*, 81(2), 201-233.
- Israel, M., Kamman, M. L., McCray, E. D., & Sindelar, P. T. (2014). Mentoring in action: The interplay among professional assistance, emotional support, and evaluation. *Exceptional Children*, 81(1), 45-63. doi:10.1177/0014402914532231
- Maria-Monica, P., & Alina, M. C. (2011). New perspectives on roles of the mentor-teacher for pedagogical practice. *Procedia - Social And Behavioral Sciences*, 15(3rd World Conference on Educational Sciences - 2011), 2078-2082. doi:10.1016/j.sbspro.2011.04.057
- National Commission on Teaching & America's Future (U.S.). (1996). What matters most: Teaching for America's future : report of the National Commission on Teaching & America's Future. New York, N.Y: The Commission.
- U.S. Department of Education (2014). Teacher attrition and mobility: Results from the 2012-2013 teacher follow-up survey. Retrieved from <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2014/2014077.pdf> June 30, 2016.
- White, M., & Mason, C. Y. (2006). Components of a successful mentoring program for beginning special education teachers: Perspectives from new teachers and mentors. *Teacher Education and Special Education*, 29(3), 191-201.

Appendix A

Interview Protocol Interview # _____

Date ____/____/____

Script

Welcome and thank you for your participation today. My name is Tiana Holmes and I am a graduate student at Kennesaw State University conducting a research project for my course on Advanced Qualitative research methods. This interview session will take about 60-90 minutes and will include 31 questions regarding your life and any key experiences you wish to focus on. One of the questions will require you to write your answer. I would like your permission to audio record this interview so that I may accurately document the information you convey. If at any time during the interview you wish to discontinue the use of the recorder or the interview itself, please feel free to let me know and we will stop. All of your responses are confidential. Your responses will remain confidential and will be used only for class and educational purposes.

At this time I would like to ask for your verbal consent and also inform you that your participation in this interview also implies your consent. Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary. If at any time you need to stop, take a break, or return to a question, please let me know. You may also withdraw your participation at any time without consequence. Do you have any questions or concerns before we begin? Then with your permission we will begin the interview.

Interview Questions – Topic Related

1. Do you have any experience with implementing social emotional learning outside of your current school?
2. Can social emotional learning transform school culture and academic success? Why or why not?
3. Would it be more challenging to use social emotional learning to transform culture and academic success at a school in an urban environment? Why or why not?
4. If you previously identified challenges, will social emotional learning help make those challenges easier?
5. Do you see yourself working in an urban environment until you retire? Why or why not?
6. Have you been prepared to teach social emotional learning?
7. Do you value the SEL training that you have received?
8. Is the SEL training that you are involved in aligned with the outcomes that you would like for your students to achieve?
9. What supports are in place to ensure the effectiveness of the SEL program?
10. What challenges do you face solely with the implementation of SEL?
11. Do you see any benefits with incorporating SEL in an urban elementary school?
12. On a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being low and 5 being high, how would you rate your current implementation of SEL? Please illustrate your answer with examples.
13. Would you describe the environment that you currently work in as challenging?
14. If so, what makes it challenging?
15. How many years have you been teaching?
16. Have you always worked in urban environments?
17. If not, how do you think urban environments differ from other school environments?
18. What grade level do you teach?

Perceptions in a Changing World

19. What subject areas do you teach?
20. How many years have you been teaching at Dobbs Elementary?
21. Tell me about an experience as a teacher that saddened you.
22. Tell me about an experience as a teacher that made you happy that you decided to teach.
23. Is your current work as a teacher preparing your students for future success?
24. Do you have any experience with educational reforms?
25. How do you feel about educational reforms?
26. How do you feel about implementing changes in your personal life? For example, if you had to move abruptly, how would you feel?
27. How do you feel about implementing changes at work?
28. Does the environment play a role in your feelings regarding change?
29. On a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being low and 5 being high, how important is teacher buy-in when implementing a change?
30. Before we conclude this interview, is there anything else that you would like to share?

Part II

1. Reconstruct a day in your life as a teacher from the time that you awake until you fall asleep. Please take as much time as you need to write the answer to this prompt.

Appendix B

Observation Protocol Social Emotional Learning – Classroom Observation

This protocol is designed to provide the researcher with a method for conducting classroom observations.

Observation Tools

The researcher will use both Observation Tools to complete the observation. Tool I should be used to script and make notes of the events occurring in the classroom. Tool II should be used to notate the practices associated with Social Emotional Learning. Tool I should be completed during the observation, and used to complete Tool II. Both tools should be completed entirely so that the researcher is able to reconstruct the observation from the notes taken. A video-camera may also be used during the observation.

Tool I – Selective Scripting Observation Tool

Selective Scripting can be used to collect information about:

- what the teacher emphasizes positively and negatively
- how the teacher expresses expectations of students
- how the teacher communicates with the students
- how the teacher gives directions to the students (who follows directions, and who does not)
- what kind of questions were asked and how were they answered
- wait time
- how the content is presented
- how the students respond

Tool II – Social Emotional Learning Observation Tool

Inventory of practices for promoting children's social emotional competence. (n.d.). *The Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning*. Retrieved from <http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/modules/module1/handout4.pdf>

The Social Emotional Learning Observation Tool should be used to encourage reflection and discussion. Use of this tool will equip the researcher with information regarding the implementation of SEL – effective or ineffective.

Both Observation Tools are attached.

Time allotted

30 minutes per observation session

Reflection Questions

Perceptions in a Changing World

- Did most students demonstrate positive social and emotional behaviors?
- Did the teachers demonstrate skills and competencies to support social and emotional development?
- What kind of support might the teachers need to better implement social emotional learning?

Selective Scripting Observation Tool I

Observer: _____ Participant: _____
Observational Time: ____ to ____ Location: _____ Date: _____

Time	Teacher	Students
Please include a Graphical Representation of the Observed Classroom		

Social Emotional Learning Observation Tool – Tool II

Observer: _____

Participant: _____

Observational Time: ____ to ____ Location: _____ Date: _____

Summary of Event Taking Place:

Building Positive Relationships

Skills and Indicators	YES	NO	Not Observed	Observations/Evidence/ Gestures/ Social Interactions	Reflection Notes/Comments
1. Develops meaningful relationships with children and families					
▪ Greet children on arrival; calls by name					
▪ Communicate with children at eye level					
▪ Verbally interact with individual children during routines and activities					
▪ Shows respect, consideration, warmth to all children					
▪ Speak calmly to children					
▪ Use a variety of strategies for building relationships with all families					
▪ Attend to children in positive ways at times when the children are not engaging in challenging behavior					
▪ Use a variety of strategies for building relationships with all families					
▪ Create a classroom that is a place that children and families like to be (i.e. feel comfortable, welcomed, and safe)					

Designing Supportive Environments

Skills and Indicators	YES	NO	Not Observed	Observations/Evidence/ Gestures/ Social Interactions	Reflection Notes/Comments
2. Designs the physical environment					
▪ Arranges traffic patterns in classroom so there are no wide open spaces					
▪ Removes obstacles that make it difficult for children with physical disabilities to move around the room					
▪ Clearly defines boundaries in learning centers					
▪ Arranges learning centers to allow room for multiple children					
▪ Provides a variety of materials in all learning centers					
▪ Designs learning centers so that children spend time evenly across centers					
▪ Considers children's interests when deciding what to put in learning centers					
▪ Makes changes and additions to learning centers on a regular basis					
▪ Visually closes learning centers when they are not an option for children to use					
3. Develops schedules and routines					
▪ Designs schedule to include a balance of large group and small group activities					
▪ Designs schedule to minimize the amount of time children spend making transitions between activities					
▪ Implements schedule consistently					
▪ Teaches children about the schedule					
▪ Provides explanations when changes in the schedule are necessary					
4. Giving Directions					
▪ Gains child's attention before giving directions					
▪ Minimizes the number of directions					

<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Individualizes the way directions are given					
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Gives clear directions					
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Gives directions that are positive					
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Gives children time to respond to directions					
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Gives children choices and options when appropriate					
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Follows through with positive acknowledgements of children's behavior					
5. Establishes and enforces clear rules, limits, and consequences for behavior					
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Identifies appropriate classroom rules with children					
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Teaches rules in developmentally appropriate ways					
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Provides opportunities for children to practice classroom rules					
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ States rules positively and specifically (avoids words "no" and "don't" as much as possible)					
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Keeps rules to a manageable number					
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Frequently reinforces children for appropriate behavior					
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Identifies consequences for both following and not following rules					
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Makes sure all adults in classroom know rules and consequences					
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Enforces rules and consequences consistently and fairly					
6. Engages in ongoing monitoring and positive attention					
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Gives children time and attention when engaging in appropriate behavior					
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Monitors adults' interactions with children throughout the day					
7. Uses positive feedback and encouragement					
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Uses positive feedback and encouragement contingent on appropriate behavior					
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Provides descriptive feedback and encouragement					
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Conveys enthusiasm while giving positive feedback and encouragement					
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Uses positive feedback and encouragement contingent on child's efforts					
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Provides nonverbal cues of appreciation					
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Recognizes that there are individual variations in what forms of acknowledgement are interpreted as positive by children					
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Involves other adults in acknowledging children					

- | | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|--|
| ▪ Models positive feedback and encouragement frequently | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|--|

Social Emotional Teaching Strategies

Skills and Indicators	YES	NO	Not Observed	Observations/Evidence/ Gestures/ Social Interactions	Reflection Notes/Comments
10. Interacts with children to develop their self-esteem					
▪ Demonstrates active listening with children					
▪ Avoids judgmental statements					
▪ Responds to children's ideas					
▪ Recognizes children's efforts					
▪ Shows empathy and acceptance of children's feelings					
11. Shows sensitivity to individual children's needs					
▪ Respects and accommodates individual needs, personalities, and characteristics					
▪ Adapts and adjusts accordingly (instruction, curriculum, materials, etc.)					
▪ Conveys acceptance of individual differences (culture, gender, sensory needs, language, abilities) through planning, material selection, and discussion of topics					
12. Encourages autonomy					
▪ Provides children with opportunities to make choices					
▪ Allows children time to respond and/or complete task independently before offering assistance					
▪ Creates opportunities for decision making, problem solving, and working together					
▪ Teaches children strategies for self-regulating and/or self-monitoring behaviors					
13. Capitalizes on the presence of typically developing peers					
▪ Utilizes peers as models of desirable social behavior					
▪ Encourages peer partner/buddies (i.e., hold hands during transitions, play partner, clean-up buddy, etc.)					

<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Demonstrates sensitivity to peer preferences and personalities					
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Shows an understanding of developmental levels of interactions and play skills					
14. Utilizes effective environmental arrangements to encourage social interactions					
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Considers peer placement during classroom activities					
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Effectively selects, arranges, and utilizes materials that promote interactions (high interest, novel, culturally meaningful)					
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Develops interaction opportunities within classroom routines (i.e., table captain, clean-up partner, etc.)					
15. Uses prompting and reinforcement of interactions effectively					
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Provides sincere, enthusiastic feedback to promote and maintain social interactions					
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Waits until interactions are finished before reinforcing; does not interrupt interactions					
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Models phrases children can use to initiate and encourage interactions					
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Ensures that interactions are mostly child-directed not teacher-directed					
16. Provides instruction to aid in the development of social skills					
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Includes social interaction goals in lesson					
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Teaches appropriate social skills through lessons and role-playing opportunities					
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Incorporates cooperative games, lessons, stories, and activities that promote altruistic behavior into planning					
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Structures activities to encourage and teach sharing					
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Structures activities to encourage and teach turn taking					
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Structures activities to encourage and teach requesting and distributing items					
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Structures activities to encourage and teach working cooperatively					
17. Promotes identification and labeling of emotions in self and others					
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Uses photographs, pictures, and posters that portray people in various emotional states					
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Uses validation, acknowledgement, mirroring back, labeling feelings, voice tones, or gestures to show an understanding of children's feelings					

<ul style="list-style-type: none">Assists children in recognizing and understanding how a classmate might be feeling by pointing out facial expressions, voice tone, body language, or words					
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Uses real-life situations to practice problem-solving, beginning with defining the problem and emotions involved					
18. Explores the nature of feelings and the appropriate ways they can be expressed					
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Teaches that all emotions are okay, but not all expressions are okay					
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Labels own emotional states and provides an action statement (e.g., I am feeling frustrated so I better take some deep breaths to calm down)					
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Uses opportunities to comment on occasions when children state that they are feeling upset or angry but are remaining calm					

Appendix C

Interview Protocol

Interview # _____

Interviewer: Joy Jones

Date: _____

Script

Welcome and thank you for your participation today. My name is Joy Jones and I am a doctoral candidate at Kennesaw State University conducting research for my dissertation study. This interview will take about 20 minutes and will include 7 questions regarding your school's New Teacher Mentor program. I would like your permission to audio record this interview so I may accurately document the information you convey. If at any time during the interview you wish to discontinue the use of the recorder or the interview itself, please feel free to let me know and we will stop. All of your responses are confidential. Your responses will remain confidential and will be used only for my dissertation and help inform the administrative team on how this program can be improved. At this time I would like to ask for your verbal consent and also inform you that your participation in this interview also implies your consent. Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary. If at any time you need to stop, take a break, or return a page, please let me know. You may also withdraw your participation at any time without consequence. Do you have any questions or concerns before we begin? Then with your permission we will begin the interview.

1. How many years of teaching experience do you have?
2. How many years have you worked at this school?
3. What subjects are you certified in?
4. Are you teaching in your field of certification?
5. From your experience, what type of support do new teachers with 3 or less years of experience need to help them be successful? Could you please provide examples to illustrate your response?
6. Do the New Teacher Mentor program activities help improve new teacher performance?
7. What qualities do you feel a good mentor should have?
8. What type of support did you receive while participating in the New Teacher Mentor program? Could you please provide examples?
9. Do you feel the support you received was effective? Could you please provide examples to illustrate your response?

Before we conclude this interview, is there anything else you would like to share?

Thank you so much for your participation today. I appreciate all of your comments regarding your school's New Teacher Mentor Program

Appendix D

Focus Group Protocol

Focus Group Participants: _____

Facilitator: _____

Date: _____

Phase 1: Before the Focus Group

1. The focus group take will run 45 minutes in length.
2. The focus group will consist of the mentees that participated in the program.

Phase 2: Conducting the Focus Group

Script

Welcome and thank you for your participation today. My name is Joy Jones and I am a graduate student at Kennesaw State University conducting a research project for my course on Advanced Qualitative research methods. This focus group interview will take about 45 minutes and will include questions regarding your school's New Teacher Mentor program. I would like your permission to audio record this interview so I may accurately document the information you convey. If at any time during the interview you wish to discontinue the use of the recorder or the interview itself, please feel free to let me know and we will stop. All of your responses are confidential. Your responses will remain confidential and will be used only for class and help inform the administrative team on how this program can be improved. At this time I would like to ask for your verbal consent and also inform you that your participation in this interview also implies your consent. Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary. If at any time you need to stop, take a break, or return a page, please let me know. You may also withdraw your participation at any time without consequence. Do you have any questions or concerns before we begin? Then with your permission we will begin the interview.

Focus Group (Mentees)

1. Which topics covered during the first semester of the New Teacher Mentor program did you find relevant and helpful?
2. If you were designing this program, which topics would you change and how?
3. Do you feel as though the number of sessions was appropriate for the first semester?
4. What experience level should teachers have to participate in this program and how long should they participate?
5. Do you feel the program structure provided sufficient opportunities for your mentor to give you support?
6. What component(s) of the program would you change and how?

*Before we conclude this focus group session, is there anything else you would like to share?
Thank you so much for your participation today. I appreciate all of your comments regarding your school's New Teacher Mentor Program.*

Appendix E

Observational Protocol

Mentor/Mentee Discussions

This protocol is designed to provide the researcher with a method for conducting mentor/mentee discussions.

Date: _____ Time: _____ Length of activity: _____ minutes Location: _____ Participants: _____	
<i>Descriptive Notes</i>	<i>Reflective Notes</i>
Physical Setting: visual Layout <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 150px; width: 100%;"></div>	(Reflective comments questions to self, observations of nonverbal behavior, my interpretation.)
Description of participants Description of activities Description of individuals engaged in activity Sequence of activity over time Interactions Unplanned events Participants comments: expressed in quotes	
(Researcher's observation of what seems to be occurring)	

Appendix F

Network Views from Atlas.ti

Usefulness of SEL

